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American boy sports stories



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AMERICAN BOY SPORTS STORIES

AMERICAN BOY
(PERIODICAL)

With a Foreword by
GRIFFITH OGDEN ELLIS

Introduction by ROBERT C. ZUPPKE



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DOUBLEDAY & CO., INC.
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

1947

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FOREWORD

THERE is a reason why boys so often tell me that, paging through a new magazine, they read first the stories with athletic illustrations. In athletics the American boy of the twentieth century lives most vividly and actively. He strives and he fights; he finds he must develop skill and exercise to the utmost his powers of strategy, generalship, decision. He sets for himself high goals, and he directs his course to them by sane living and keen application.

Football and baseball, swimming and hockey, basketball and the rest set American blood racing and bring out at their best what we like to call typical American qualities. This book, made from some of the most outstanding tales of sports that have come to our attention, is a cross-section of American life—a handbook of the vitality of American youth. It makes excellent reading, and it paints a proud picture.

GRIFFITH OGDEN ELLIS,
Editor, *The American Boy*.

Detroit, March 4, 1929.

SEP 13 1947

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INTRODUCTION

“ATHLETICS for all” is a slogan that has become a byword. In every university, college and school the mass athletics movement has gone booming and rolling along, until we have become pretty much a nation interested in athletics. We’re not all all-Americans—not everybody is named Bobby Jones, Bill Tilden, or Red Grange.

But most boys to-day have their favorite sport. A generation ago there were baseball, bicycling, a little football and foot-racing. To-day a man can go in for any of these, or for golf, tennis, swimming, basketball, hockey, boxing and wrestling, indoor baseball, gymnastics; sometimes he’ll find squash, handball, polo, yachting, rowing available to him. It is safe to say that every reader of this book has played several of these games, and specialized in some of them.

So every reader will find something of direct appeal to him in the tales told here. Perhaps, too, he’ll find hints that will make him a better batter, a faster swimmer, or a surer tackler. It’s a book for everybody, for in the twentieth century everybody is interested in athletics!

ROBERT C. ZUPPKE,
Head Football Coach, University of Illinois

AMERICAN BOY SPORTS STORIES

AMERICAN BOY SPORTS STORIES

THE SHOUTING VIOLET

BY WILLIAM HEYLIGER

FOR nine years football at Grandon had been largely a matter of 'Gene Bancker. Short and massive, wrinkled and bald, the coach had done more than dominate Grandon football—he *was* Grandon football. Horsey Mott, sports editor of the Grandon *Times*, always called the eleven "'Gene Bancker's Boys." Eight-column headlines, across the top of the sports page, told the world that "'Gene Bancker's Boys Triumphed Over Brandywine" or that "'Gene Bancker's Boys Fall Before Scarlet Eleven." Horsey stamped the team for what it was—'Gene Bancker's.

And yet, privately, Mott held Bancker in a sort of careless contempt.

"'Gene's a mealy-mouthed fraud," he confided to his friends in the fight clubs, the billiard rooms, and the bowling alleys, "with his talk about manhood and what a player owes to the squad. You ought to hear him talk to an audience of high school kids—he lays it on thick. And yet, what's he there for? He's there to win. He'd sell his grandmother every day in the week for a chance to beat Brandywine."

Grandon students, too, believed that Bancker would

move heaven and earth to win. They, like Horsey, didn't know their man. They'd seen him at long range, from the seats of the stands, and he had taken on the color of his tearing, fighting, bucking, heaving teams. Here and there through the years, men of the squad had found the true Bancker. They didn't speak of their discovery—but they knew that Bancker, in his heart of hearts, looked upon his teams as incidentals and believed that his main job was to turn out men.

For the coach was an idealist—and it was not in Horsey Mott to understand an idealist. Beneath Bancker's granite exterior was a warm, human fire of faith and enthusiasm. To him a football field was a laboratory for the forging of character. Players were whetted to a fighting edge, hammered to a point where they acquired self-control and steeled to withstand shock and disaster. The campus thought in terms of games and Bancker thought in terms of men. For three years he kept Terry Ball on the squad, not because he ever hoped to use the boy, but because Terry was learning how to make a gallant fight against hopeless odds. Terry, graduating without his letter, carried something in his veins—put there by Bancker—with which to face the world.

And then Trimble Roberts came to Grandon. Knipe, who coached the freshman team, brought word of him to Bancker.

"'Gene, I've got a good boy in my outfit named Trimble Roberts. I'm using him at full. He can kick, run and pass—a real triple threat."

"What's he like?" Bancker asked.

"Five foot eleven, about 178—"

"Not that. You say he's good. Does he know it?"

"Yeah, he knows—too well."

The veteran nodded. "A shouting violet. Anything else?"

"He carries a smooth line of talk, and he feels that it's everybody's duty to step up and give him three cheers."

"He'll come pretty close to earning anything he gets from me," Bancker said mildly.

"The trouble is," Knipe said thoughtfully, "that he's good enough to earn it. Why don't you come over and take a look?"

A week later varsity practice ended early, and Bancker walked over to the freshman field. There he found a blond giant running wild—and Horsey Mott of the *Grandon Times*, in a tan overcoat, tan Fedora, tan spats and a Malacca cane, prowling the side lines like a hawk. Horsey pointed with his cane.

"Some boy out there, Bancker," he said.

"I've never seen him in action," said the coach.

"He brought you over here to-day," Horsey said shrewdly.

Bancker didn't deny it. Nor did he confide any of his thoughts in Horsey. Though Mott carried him in the headlines, the two couldn't be called friends. There was a hard, calculating quality about Horsey that Bancker couldn't bring himself to like. As a matter of courtesy he gave Mott free run of the field and the locker room, but he never gave him his confidence, never honored him with a full measure of trust.

"This is the third time I've been out to see him," Horsey volunteered.

"You must find him worth watching," Bancker said a little dryly.

"And how!" Horsey grinned.

The play had moved down the field, and the coach walked away to follow it. Half an hour later Horsey tapped him on the arm.

"What do you think of him, 'Gene?"

"Not so good," said the coach. "Swelled up like a balloon. So full of his own greatness he can't see anybody else. The team won't mean a thing to him—unless he changes his ideas."

"It hasn't spoiled his game."

"The thing I have in mind," Bancker said quietly, "goes deeper than the game. Character—that's what counts. No team can win always, but its players can always be men."

"Sure," replied Horsey. "That listens fine, 'Gene, but since when has anybody pinned a medal on the loser? What's the use of being a star if you can't shine? That's my motto. I'm practical."

The practice was over and Bancker, with an abrupt movement, swung on his heel and walked away.

Horsey laughed indulgently. "The poor nut," he scoffed, and followed the freshman team to the locker room. Roberts, coming out from under a shower, waved a greeting. They had already become acquainted.

"Thanks for that story last night, Mr. Mott."

"There'll be more of 'em," assented Horsey. "I want to talk to you on the way back."

They left the locker room together, part of a haphazard group. Horsey waited until they had worked themselves free of the others.

"Did you see Bancker there to-day?" he asked.

Roberts nodded.

"He came over to watch you."

"I thought so."

Horsey chuckled. "You know your onions." Then his voice changed. "Trim, how would you like to be known from coast to coast as a football big gun, another Red Grange?"

The boy's eyes gleamed.

"I can fix it for you. I write the games for the wire service. I can build you up. They'll know you wherever reports are published. The 'Flaming Comet!' There's a name for the headlines."

The boy's breath came out in a long-drawn sigh.

"But there's one obstacle," Horsey added.

"Where?" Trim's voice was sharp.

"Bancker," Horsey said laconically. He waited a moment. "I've nothing against Bancker, but he's a fanatic. He'll spout manhood and character at you the minute you go to the varsity squad. Every day you'll be told what you owe the squad. In your case, that will be bunk. You'll be a darn sight better than anyone else on your team. You'll do enough for the team just by playing your own sweet game. Bancker will try to subordinate you to the team. Don't let him get away with it. Go out and develop yourself to the limit. Play your own game. Be spectacular. Let the rest of the team do the sacrificing; they haven't got much to sacrifice. If you finish at Grandon with a country-wide rep, what's to prevent you from signing a professional contract for a wad of money? Do you see it?"

Oh, yes; Trim saw it. The picture danced before his

eyes like a golden dream. That there might be another angle—Bancker's angle, the school's angle—did not occur to him. The others had nothing to sacrifice. Horsey had made it seem plausible.

"As for Bancker—" the editor began.

"I'll handle Bancker," Trim stated confidently.

"Good boy." Horsey grinned and swung his cane with a jaunty gesture. "Give me something to write about and I'll spread you around while you're still a freshman."

Trim gave his adviser plenty of vivid copy, and the sports pages began to take notice of a "blond comet" who was burning things up. Against Morristown the freshman gained 73 yards, and against Stevens he kicked three field goals. Horsey told him to discard the head-gear.

"Let that blond mop of yours stick out," the editor said. "We'll make it our trade-mark. None of this 'Who's got the ball?' when you go down the field. We want the whole stand to yell 'There goes the Comet!'"

Trim played bareheaded against Underwood and scored five touchdowns. After that game, the casual air of superiority that he had brought to Grandon became a distinct swagger. Bancker, crossing the campus, met him walking with Knipe. The freshman coach introduced them.

"You play full, don't you?" Bancker asked, as though the player's status were just a little vague.

"You ought to know," Roberts drawled, "after having come to frosh field to look me over."

Bancker's eyes grew a little hard. This was even

worse than he had expected. A minute later, when Trim had gone, he accused Knipe of having "told Roberts something."

"It wouldn't be necessary," Knipe said wearily. "When he saw you at practice, there was only one possible answer. You were there to get an eyeful of him."

"What a nice little playmate we'll have on the varsity next year," was Bancker's comment.

"You're welcome to him," Knipe sighed. "If anybody's telling him things, it's Horsey Mott. Haven't you seen the stuff in the papers?"

"I'm watching it," Bancker said grimly.

Roberts beat the Brandywine freshmen almost single-handed. Horsey, growing hysterical over the accomplishment, said in print that the freshman was sure to be an outstanding player on next year's varsity. Bancker read the article and frowned. He walked to the *Times* office.

"Horsey," he said, "it's fair enough for you to make predictions—all sports writers do. But when you say Roberts is going to be the whole show next year, you're doing the kid harm."

Horsey laughed soothingly. "Sometimes a fellow so far outclasses his field that he's down in the books months before the party. There's no question about Trim."

"Trim can't stand praise," Bancker said evenly. "He's not built that way. If you play him up this way, you'll ruin him. And you may seriously hurt the team. Lay off Roberts for a while."

Horsey bristled. "Are you trying to tell me what to write?"

"No," Bancker retorted, a hint of sharpness in his voice, "I'm telling you what it's unwise to write."

Horsey wrote no further details of Trim's coming glory—but the damage had been done. Men who had taken their knocks and had won their varsity places only after prolonged and consistent effort, resented the assumption that any freshman, untried on the big squad had merely to take off his vest and step into the line-up. Goodwin, who had been elected to captain next year's team, tried to stem the tide of resentment.

"You can't blame Roberts for what a newspaper writes," the captain argued.

"Go out and watch this Roberts strut," said Foxen, one of the ends. "He believes every word in the paper. He's taken a crack at you already. Told some of his crowd it was queer the varsity should elect a captain who played in the backfield but had never carried the ball over for a touchdown. Believe me, this boy thinks he's a football authority."

Goodwin flushed. "It's true, anyhow. I've never gone over for a touchdown." There was a faint, almost imperceptible, regret in his voice.

"But what the blamed fool doesn't realize," Rowe, a guard, broke in hotly, "is that every time we get within scoring distance, you call some other man's signal because you think that man's play stands a better chance to go through."

Goodwin's flush deepened. "Oh, well," he murmured "it doesn't matter." But it did matter. Horsey Mot was stirring things up and so was Roberts. Everything pointed to a mess next September when the squad turned out. In the end Goodwin took his troubles to Bancker

"Roberts has been fed on a rich diet," the coach said. "He's put on a lot of weighty ideas. We'll have to sweat them out of him."

Goodwin knew what that meant—day after day with the rookies until a player lost his exalted opinion of himself and was eagerly willing to be good. The captain was a little troubled. "If it won't kill his fire—"

Bancker's smile was dry. "You don't know this fellow's kind of fire, Good."

And so, when the varsity candidates turned out early the following September, the coach gave no sign that he expected anything from a blond freshman who nonchalantly awaited an assignment.

"Over there with Tyndal, Roberts," he said, and Grandon's blond comet joined the awkward squad.

There were chuckles among the veterans. Tyndal began a lecture on the proper way to tackle, and Roberts gawmed and stared up at the sky.

"Roberts!" Tyndal said sharply.

The boy waved a negligent hand. "Don't worry about me. I've heard it all before."

Five days later, elevens were formed and began to get a taste of the science of running, blocking, and breaking through, but the star of last year's freshman team remained with those who were painstakingly going over the rudiments.

On that fifth day Horsey, who had come to the field very afternoon, approached Bancker.

"'Gene," he asked, "what about Trim Roberts?"

A pulse in Bancker's neck began to throb. His eyes were little and hard. "Well, what about him?"

"Why—nothing." Horsey went down the field stabbing at the soft ground with his cane.

That afternoon Bancker posted the first cut. Every man still fooling around with Tyndal's squad went over apprehensively to read it—every man except one. Roberts merely gave the coach a mocking smile.

"Nice weather for exiles, Mr. Bancker," he said pleasantly.

Bancker knew that "sweating" had failed. Trim's egotism, his belief in a star of destiny, were too strong and lofty to be punctured.

"Refuses to be disciplined," the coach confided in Captain Goodwin. "Blandly holds out a platter for what he wants." The coach was silent a moment. "I've got to give it to him," he added. "He's a good enough player to be entitled to a chance. I'll throw him into one of the line-ups on Monday."

And on Saturday Horsey Mott's signed column of sports chat carried this:

Why is it that an undeniably strong and powerful player is sometimes frozen out? Is it because a coach, long used to hero worship, is afraid that a rising star may eclipse his glory?

The pulse beat again in Bancker's throat. Goodwin was aghast.

"You won't use him now, Coach?"

"Yes," Bancker said slowly, "I'll use him. This will make it look as though my hand was forced. That's unfortunate, but it doesn't change the facts. He's entitled to his chance."

On Monday Roberts, smiling and winking at his friends, sauntered over to the third squad. Before the

week was out he was on the second team. Three days later he was tearing things wide open for the varsity. To Bancker he was studiously polite—with a politeness that almost bordered on insolence.

"Trim," said Bancker, "you follow your interference a shade too closely."

"Yes?" Trim spoke in a lazy drawl. "I thought you wanted speed?"

"I also want headwork," the coach said quietly. "If you're on the heels of your interference and it is stopped dead, you pile right into it. Give yourself enough room to swing one way or the other in case of a jam."

"Now let's have the straight of this," the fullback said easily.

Bancker waited.

"Isn't the real trouble the fact that the interference is too slow? Of course it's easier to slow down a fast man than it is to speed up slow men. You don't have to beat around the bush when you're talking to me." He strolled into the locker room and began to strip for the shower.

"What did Coach say to you?" Foxen asked curiously.

"It happened," Roberts announced lightly, "that I said it to Coach."

Foxen made an expressive cut across his throat with his fingers and began to whistle a dead march.

"Tell me that after the Bradley game," Roberts invited.

Against Bradley he ran wild. Twice, when the holes he shot for didn't open, he shunted off to one side, picked narrow gaps, and went through for nice gains. Once, in

a broken field, he dodged, sidestepped, squirmed, reversed his field, and ran sixty yards for a touchdown. He threw one long forward pass that put the team in line for another score, and his punts hopelessly outdistanced the rival kicker. Against freshman competition he had been great; to-day, against varsity competition, he was greater. The final whistle sent the team to the locker room jubilant. Roberts, his shoulders swaying, passed among them as a god.

"Did you see me break loose from my interference and get away?" he demanded.

"I remember Coach telling you how it should be done," Foxen said coldly.

"He told all of us," Roberts spat back, "but I seemed to be the only one who could do it."

Goodwin, who feared a row, began to sing a Grandon song, and the quarrel was drowned out.

It was dark when the team came in a body from the locker room. A newsboy was at the first corner.

"*Times* football extra! All about the big game. *Times* extra!"

The football crowd swamped the newsboy. Roberts, getting the first paper, held it out where it caught the light from a street lamp. The story was right across the page:

BLOND COMET TRIUMPHS OVER BRADLEY

"Well," Roberts said with a thrill of excitement in his voice, "it looks as though 'Gene Bancker's been pushed out of the headlines."

Somebody uttered a startled, warning "Sssh!" Rob-

ts, turning his head leisurely, saw Bancker only a few feet behind him.

"Oh, hello, Coach." His tone was casual. "Care to see what the *Times* says?" He held out the newspaper. There were those on the squad—Foxen, Rowe, Floodgood—who expected Roberts to come to swift and sudden football grief. Bancker had never built up reputation for softness, and Grandon players were not in the habit of slapping him in the eye and getting away with it. But, after the Bradley game, the fullback continued to fill his niche in the team, and Horsey continued to haunt the field and the locker room, and there was much whispering between them.

The situation worried Goodwin. A certain studied insolence on Roberts' part had become a habit—it seeped out of him in all his dealings with the coach. And although Bancker remained outwardly calm and untroubled, the captain saw that jumping pulse in his neck and tried to warn the star.

"That stuff makes me tired," Roberts yawned. "You're the fourth fellow who's tried to tell me the goblin will get me. Bancker's never liked me. Now, it happens that I'm just a little too good to put up with a coach's grouch—"

"When did he ever hand it to you, Trim?"

"Have you forgotten how long he kept me with Tynal's squad?"

"But, good heavens, Trim, other men have been kept—"

"Not star men," Roberts said complacently. "I'm too good to be handed treatment like that, and I'm too good to be chucked off the team. I'm the boy that scores

touchdowns. No offense, Good, but it's true. Bancker ignored me at the start, and I'm just giving him back a little of his own medicine."

"Do you think," Goodwin asked in scorn, "that Bancker will put up with this all season?"

"He may have to," Roberts said calmly. "Horsey Mott says— Oh, well, I'm not worrying."

The interview did not lessen the captain's worries. He knew that one half the team's strength was built around the fullback, and he knew, too, that at any moment that strength might be lost to the team. Some day Bancker's patience would snap, and then there would be a reckoning.

Roberts starred against Carlton. The Carlton team, heavy and brawny, wore itself out driving at the Grandon line. Time and again it cracked the line, skirted the tackles, skidded around the ends—only to lose the ball in Grandon territory and have Roberts' driving foot recover whole slews of distance. For three quarters the blond comet's kicking stood between Grandon and disaster. Then Carlton, discouraged and exhausted, lost her edge, and Grandon worked a painful passage down the field into position to give Roberts a shot at the goal posts. From the 35-yard line he put the ball over, and the game was won.

The fullback got the headlines again. Horsey did himself proud:

COMET'S SENSATIONAL KICKING WINS FOR GRANDON

"Too bad the newspapers are giving Bancker the short end," Roberts said in the locker room. Fortu-

tely, Goodwin thought, Bancker was not there at the moment. The next instant this sense of relief was swallowed by the realization that, had the coach been present, Roberts would have strutted his stuff just the same.

The following Tuesday night Horsey brought a bundle of newspaper clippings to Roberts' dormitory rooms.

"From all over the country," the sports editor said with a flourish. "Boy, we're cashing in. One of the newspaper syndicates wired me to-day for a special story about you with photographs. Watch me go to it! We're coming along, and there mustn't be any stops. You know what that means, Trim—something spectacular every time, something I can spread."

The fullback's eyes snapped.

"Pick at least one spot in every game for a show," Horsey went on. "You may have to fight for that spot. Well, suppose you do. You can get away with stuff that those other dubs wouldn't attempt. You're the Blond Comet. Don't let them forget it. If Bancker tries to step on your neck, tell me. I made him see reason once; I can do it again."

Roberts brought the most lurid of the clippings to the gym and pasted them on the door of his locker. Mutterings ran through the squad—bitter talk and derisive laughter. Bancker gave no sign that he saw the stories.

"Trim!" Goodwin spoke sharply but in an undertone. "You're not going to leave those clippings there?"

"Why not?" Roberts' voice carried the length of the

room. "That's what a man gets for scoring touchdowns."

"Haul off, Good, and poke him in the jaw," Foxen cried in disgust.

The captain sweated with a fear that open warfare would break out in the team. If Roberts was going to keep this up . . . He paid a visit, after supper, to the house off the campus where Bancker lived.

"Afraid I'll throw out our shouting violet?" the coach asked with a quick look at the boy.

"No." Goodwin shook his head. "I was afraid of that at first. What worries me now is a smash-up within the team."

"If I ever get rid of him," Bancker said slowly, "it won't be because of what he's done to me, but what he does to himself. As for a smash-up in the team, forget it. We've got the Manhattan game to think about."

The clippings stayed on the locker and were studiously ignored. Goodwin was thankful for that. Friday night, Horsey's before-the-game story predicted victory for Grandon "provided the Blond Comet comes through with his usual game." The story was loaded with danger but the squad took it without comment. Goodwin wondered if Bancker had spoken to Foxen and one or two of the other firebrands.

The day of the game brought a clouded sky and a threat of snow. A strong wind blew out of the north and Horsey, coming to the locker room while the team made ready for the field, shivered and wished he had worn a heavier coat. He avoided Bancker—something in the coach's face gave him warning—but he spoke to the players. Foxen answered him curtly. Goodwin didn't

answer him at all. The sports editor caught Trim's eye and gave his cane a derisive twirl.

Bancker's instructions to the team were short and art.

"This wind," he said, "isn't going to last. If we guess the toss we'll take the north goal. Roberts will kick as soon as we get the ball. We'll let Manhattan wear herself out battering at the line. That's all."

They crowded out, Roberts the third or fourth player and Horsey almost at his shoulder. The moment they passed through the door the writer spoke.

"Remember what I told you, Trim. Watch for your chance."

Goodwin caught a word here and there—enough to comprehend. He looked around for Bancker, but the coach, trailing the squad, had not yet reached the door. When he did come out, Horsey was almost at the stand in the way to his seat. Goodwin, in a shaking voice, told what had happened.

That telltale pulse leaped again in Bancker's throat. "Outside coaching?" he asked.

"It looks that way," Goodwin choked. "Because he's always written our games we give him the freedom of the field and the locker room and he—"

"Save your energy for the game," said Bancker. "I'll attend to Horsey."

Goodwin won the toss and took the north goal. Roberts kicked and the ball, helped along by the wind, went far out of bounds, to be brought back and put into play. In three plays Manhattan made a first down. Another smash at the line netted eight yards. Then Manhattan fumbled, and Foxen scooped up the ball

and ran forty yards for a touchdown. The score board showed a 6 for Grandon, and Roberts stepped out to kick for the extra point.

With his blond hair blowing in the wind he was a picture. The crowd broke into a roar, giving him a hero's acclaim and mentally adding a point to the score.

But the great Roberts missed.

An audible sigh of dismay ran through the stands. Roberts stamped his foot and jawed at Bloodgood, who had held the ball. The next instant, as though conscious that this was not the type of show that would get him anything, he tried to cover his display of spleen and went down the field for another kick-off.

All through the half his blond hair, unprotected by a headguard, flamed through the scrimmage. To the stands, he was plunging into the line with furious zeal, but Bancker, appraising every move with the knowing eye of experience, knew that Grandon's shouting violet was playing in a temper. Against Bradley and Carlton he had been a shatterer of enemy morale; against Manhattan he was a picturesque but futile threat. Once he was thrown for a staggering loss. Stung by his failure he lost his football rhythm. He fell away from his football instinct and began to play wild.

At the end of the half Grandon still led, 6 to 0, but the confidence that had come with Foxen's run was gone. The team was tired. The players trotted to the locker room.

Bancker, watching the door, was the first to see Horsey Mott cross the threshold of the room. The sports editor's face wore a frown of anxiety, as though

Some weighty and important project had gone amiss. Roberts, sitting on a bench and staring at the floor, was startled by the crisp sound of the coach's voice addressing Mott.

"Anything on your mind, Horsey?"

The sports editor, too, was struck by something in the voice. He had always been at home here, sure of his welcome, confident. Now, strangely, his step faltered as though he were suddenly conscious of a vague and disquieting change.

"I want to talk to Roberts, 'Gene.'"

"You'll have to see him after the game."

"But this won't take a mo—"

"After the game," said Bancker.

The room had grown very still, and Horsey was conscious of the eyes of the players, staring at him with a curious intentness. The uncertain atmosphere grew clear and definite; he recognized it for hostility.

"Look here, 'Gene,'" he said angrily, "don't make the mistake of going off half cocked. I'm a valuable man to have as a friend. I've always had the run of this place—"

"But you can't stay here now," the coach interrupted flatly.

"Are you ordering me out?" Horsey asked incredulously.

The coach nodded.

"Why, you—you—I've tooted your horn, I've built you a faked reputation. I've—"

At the forbidding look in the coach's eyes, Horsey Mott's sputtering voice died. For several heartbeats he stood his ground, furious and uncertain. One of the

players vented a nerve-tensioned laugh. Abruptly the sports editor jammed the cane under his arm, swung on his heel and was gone.

"Somebody close the door," Bancker said quietly.

Out in the stands the crowd was singing "Glorious Grandon" in a mighty, rolling chorus. Rowe complained of his shoulder, and Bancker examined it with complete concentration, as though he had already forgotten the clash with Horsey. Foxen lay back, relaxed, and smiled dreamily at the door through which Horsey had disappeared. Goodwin was wondering if the row, coming on the heels of that terrific first half, would sink the team. The sledding would be hard if Roberts grew sulky. And yet he would not have had Bancker act otherwise.

Roberts hadn't stirred from his bench. The quarrel had come as a shock, but after the first flush of amazement his eyes followed Bancker with all the old insolence. The whole thing was plain to him. The coach, huffed because he was no longer heralded as the great god of Grandon, had gone out for revenge.

"First," Roberts told himself, "he tried to hold me down, and now he goes after my friends. He can't throw me, and he knows it. I'm too good."

He had to stand by Horsey. The thought took hold of him. The trainer adjusted the bandage on his right ankle—he was scarcely conscious of the act. A voice said "Five more minutes," and Bancker began to speak in an endeavor to hearten his players for the gruelling half to come. The fullback didn't even attempt to catch the drift of the talk. How could he help Horsey? Why, by giving him real stuff to write about. Every time he

starred, every time he pulled off a spectacular play, he would provide Horsey with a new nail to hammer into Bancker's sensitive hide. He gave the coach a sidelong glance of triumph.

Bancker caught it, but gave no sign. "That's all," he said quietly. "They'll probably score a touchdown this next half. I count on you to score one, too. They'll probably score first; don't let it worry you. Everybody out."

Once away from the locker room there was a low-voiced speculation among the squad. Roberts caught some of it as the players trotted toward the field. Would Horsey go after Bancker in the newspapers? Horsey was a tough man when it came to roasting. If he started to get nasty—Roberts shrugged his shoulders. Bancker would deserve anything he got.

The blond fullback's temper, his uncertainty, were gone. As he pawed the ground with his feet, waiting for the kick-off, he noticed that the wind had gone down. Kicks would ride under their own power, and would ride true. All he needed was a shot or two at the goal posts. The whistle shrilled, and as the oval arched toward him, a corner of his mind held to the thought that in this half he had to pick a spot for a show.

Goodwin gave him the ball for the first play, and he slid off tackle for six yards. Bloodgood tried the right end, and was stopped at the line. A moment later Roberts smashed center for first down. Grandon's song thundered from the stands.

Manhattan had weighed Roberts in the first half and had found him wanting. Now the Manhattan captain revamped his opinion. Two men were detailed to cover the Comet and not let him get away. At once Grandon

seemed to lose her punch. Twice Roberts tried, and twice two Manhattan tigers got him before he could start. Grandon kicked.

The Manhattan machine, denied in the first half, now swarmed over the Grandon line. Straight, old-fashioned plunging, mixed up with crisscrosses, shifts and short forward passes. The Grandon team dug in and heaved, grunted and went down. The blond hair of Roberts, flaming, disordered, marked the disastrous tide of the battle. With a final thrust, Manhattan put the ball over for a touchdown—and kicked goal. The score was 7 to 6.

"All right, fellows," Goodwin panted. "Bancker said she'd get one touchdown and get it first. Now it's our turn."

Roberts wiped the sweat out of his eyes. Up in the stands they were probably saying that if he hadn't missed that point after touchdown the score would be tied. The fear of being blamed for defeat, the dread that his fame would dwindle, charged him with volcanic power.

His kicking that day made kicking history. It became increasingly evident as the game ran on that Manhattan was the stronger team—and yet she could not score again. A blond giant braced the line, put a stop to the enemy's forward passes by an uncanny ability to guess where the pass was to go, and undid every Manhattan offensive with a long, ground-gaining kick.

The stands grew hoarse shouting, "Roberts! Roberts! Roberts! Roberts!"

And then, taking the ball on her own twenty-eight

yard line after one of the Comet's terrific kicks, Manhattan made her second fumble of the day. There followed a riot of arms and legs! A roar swelled from the crowd! When the heaped players were untangled, Goodwin had the ball, and the Grandon stands had a moment of madness. Twenty-eight yards from a touch-down! Grandon shrieked its prayer:

"Come on, Trim! Come on, you Comet!"

Bancker's face was impassive, but the pulse in his neck belied his calm. No team is proof against panic when it loses the ball close to its own goal line. Manhattan, for the time being, was frantic.

"If Good knows enough," the coach muttered, "to try a short forward pass while they're upset—"

The captain called a series of numbers.

"Smart boy!" Bancker smiled. "Trust him to see it."

One of the players sprang out of position crying, "Signal! Signal!"

"Roberts!" Bancker muttered in sharp recognition, and stood as though turned to stone.

Goodwin took a step backward to speak to the full-back. It seemed to the coach that they argued hotly. Again the captain bent behind the center. Again he called a string of numbers—and again Roberts interrupted the play.

"Signal!"

This time the argument was prolonged and the whole team went into a huddle. When the players scattered to their places instinct told Bancker that something had been changed. He saw Roberts step back into kicking position. Then he understood, and his face went black.

The ball came back, the lines heaved and spilled, Roberts' foot swung, and the ball arched into the air. End over end it spun, curving as it sped on its flight. For one breathless instant it seemed as though that tumbling oval, weighted with so much of hope and fear, would veer to the outside of the posts. But by a matter of inches it fell between the uprights and above the bar.

A shriek burst from the stands.

Bancker, staring at the ground as though in deep thought, walked along the side line. The cheers, unheeded, almost unheard, crashed in volleys above his head.

"Boy!" cried one of the blanket-wrapped substitutes. "Look at Roberts strut."

"Can you blame him?" another asked enviously.

That unexpected blow had washed the fight out of Manhattan and, with only a few minutes left, it was Grandon's game. Bancker heard the whistle for the kickoff, but didn't even glance toward the field. Presently there came a sudden burst of cheering, spectators started pouring out of the stands, the substitutes began legging it for the gym. The coach knew that the game was over. Still lost in thought he was caught in the crowd and engulfed.

The squad was yelling and banging equipment around when he reached the locker room. Something in his face suddenly stilled them, as something in his face checked Horsey Mott.

"Trim," he said, "I'd like a word with you."

He walked down to a little room off the locker room. Roberts, sauntering negligently, followed in his wake. One corner of his mouth twitched derisively as he

passed Foxen and Goodwin. He disappeared into the little room, and Bancker carefully closed the door.

Roberts made a grimace. "Bad as that, Coach?"

"Bad as that," Bancker said gravely. He pulled out a chair, sat down at his desk, and balanced a paper cutter on the palm of one hand. "Why did you question Goodwin's generalship and insist upon kicking?"

"Because I knew I could make it."

"Any other reason?"

"That's enough, isn't it?"

"It might be, if it were true. Unfortunately there *was* another reason. Your halo was fading, and you wanted to give it a fresh coat of gilt. You missed a point after touchdown and flew into a rage. Then you couldn't get through the line. It began to look as though you weren't going to be the shining hero of this game, and that galled you. And so, when we suddenly found ourselves faced with a chance to win, you insisted on a shot for the goal posts. Good wanted to try for a touchdown. If his plan had been to kick, he would have run one play off toward the center of the field for better position. That would have been good football. But you wanted that difficult angle. All the more glory for you if you put it over. I know what was in Good's mind. He didn't want to upset his team with a bitter argument on the field. He let you have your way. That was a mistake. Had there been time to send in a substitute, you would never have made that kick."

"Really? And who would have taken me out?"

"I would. No player at Grandon can be bigger than the team."

Roberts cast a bored glance at a corner of the ceil-

ing. "It happens," he observed, "that I am bigger than the team. The team couldn't score, but I put over a field goal."

"It might have been better," Bancker said slowly, "if you'd missed. You might have learned something from a failure of that kind. However, you made it. For Grandon? No—for Trim Roberts. A few more cheers for the Comet. If you had missed that kick our best chance would have been gone. Grandon would have been sunk, a victim to your appetite for a pat on the back."

"But I didn't miss," Roberts said mildly.

"I might have known you couldn't see it," Bancker sighed, and laid the paper cutter on the desk. "You're not happy unless you're getting the spotlight. You look for cheers. Your hand is always out for praise. You feel that the world ought to wrap up all its nice little prizes just for you. You can see nobody but yourself."

"I can see three games I've won for you," Roberts observed.

"Does that really mean so much?" Bancker asked slowly. "I've always believed that I'm here for something bigger than the mere turning out of winning teams. I'm here to make men. I don't expect you to see that. I doubt if you have in you the makings of a man, but I'm going to find out. One trouble with you, Trim, is that you think you're indispensable. You think the team can't get along without you. That's a bad state of mind. It becomes a habit. A few years from now you'll begin to think the world can't get along without you. Once you get that idea as a set conviction you're licked. You're almost licked now."

"Tell that to Carlton, or Bradley, or Manhattan," Roberts invited.

"I'm telling it to you. It's up to somebody to bring you down to earth, to shake the cobwebs out of your brain, to show you that, after all, you're just a human being and not a miracle. There's only one way to make you see it, Trim, and that's to drop you from the squad. And so—I'm dropping you."

Roberts took it with good humor. "How long do you think you're going to be able to keep me with the scrubs?"

"You don't understand," Bancker said. "I'm dropping you from football entirely."

Roberts stared at the man, suspecting some strange jest. Slowly it was forced in upon him that the coach was serious. His cheeks flushed a little, but his eyes held their old light of mockery.

"You mean this, don't you? First Horsey, and then me. Quite a day's work, Coach." His voice became confidential, the voice of one quite sure of himself. "Do you think you can get away with it? Grandon's played three games and I've won them all. You're not forgetting that, are you? Do you think the campus will forget it? Or, with me out of the way, do you think it will be 'Gene Bancker's Boys' in the headlines again?"

The pulse in Bancker's neck throbbed. "You're getting out on thin ice, Trim."

"It strikes me," Roberts said, unworried, "that you're out on thin ice yourself. And what a splash there's going to be when you go through."

He came back to the locker room whistling, took his shower, and began to dress. Questioning eyes followed

him—Foxen's, Goodwin's, Rowe's. He spread a sweater on the floor, cleaned out his locker, and began to roll his belongings into a ball. With the loaded sweater swinging at his side he moved toward the door.

"What's the big idea?" Rowe demanded.

"Old Leather-face has canned me," Roberts smiled.

Goodwin's head came up with a snap.

"But I'll be back," the fullback said lightly. "This time Bancker has called the wrong signal. What a story this will make for my friend Horsey Mott."

Something like a gasp ran through the squad. There was a knife in that last sentence, and they all saw its edge. After what had happened to-day, Horsey would be in a mood to cut loose with a poisonous pen. Goodwin went cold.

"Trim! You're too big for a thing like that. Bancker doesn't deserve such a deal."

"I don't deserve the deal he's given me."

"If you won't think of him, think of the team."

"I'm thinking of myself." Roberts said it frankly and unashamed.

"That's all you've ever thought of," Goodwin cried in sudden passion. "If you have any idea we're going to let you try to smear a man like 'Gene— Stop him, Foxen. The crazy fool—"

Foxen sprang for the door, only to have it close in his face. Roberts was gone.

The captain was suddenly conscious that another door had opened. Bancker, inscrutable and unruffled, came out of his cubbyhole of an office and sent a fleeting glance toward the fullback's empty locker.

"You knew it was coming," he said to the captain.

Yes, Goodwin had known it. No Grandon man had ever been bigger than a Grandon team. "I thought it best not to have you in there when I cut him loose. No need for you to be mixed up in it."

It was like Bancker, Goodwin thought, to push somebody else out of the line of fire and take the entire responsibility himself.

The captain's heart suddenly warmed with a faint hope. Perhaps Horsey Mott would come to his senses—would realize that it didn't pay to buck 'Gene Bancker. What could he hope to gain by making capital of the fullback's exit?

But next day's *Times* was bitter and malicious.

ALL GRANDON IN UPROAR AS BLOND COMET IS FIRED FROM TEAM BY CZAR BANCKER

'Gene Bancker, dictatorial Grand Poobah of Grandon football, has fired Trim Roberts, the sensational Blond Comet, from the team.

As a result all Grandon is in an uproar of resentment.

The Comet was beheaded ten minutes after his brilliant drop kick had won the Manhattan game. He has been the team's outstanding star. Without him Grandon would not have won a game this season.

The football squad is in a panic. The demoralized players do not know who will be the next to get the axe. Campus gossip says that the team's spirit has been shattered and—

Goodwin read no more. A cold fury shook his body.

"The lying rat!" he cried to Foxen. "He knows why Trim was canned. He knows the team's with Bancker. He knows there's no panic. I'm going to issue a statement and deny this." After supper he went to Bancker's room.

"To whom will you give this statement?" the coach asked quietly.

"Why—Horsey, of course. Who else is there to give it to?"

"Think he'll use it?" Bancker shook his head. "When there's only one newspaper in a town and that newspaper goes after you, you're out of luck. Fortunately, most papers are fair. We've had the misfortune to run foul of a Horsey Mott."

Goodwin bit his lip and stared at the floor. "This may go on all season."

"It may."

"What are we supposed to do—take it lying down?"

"No," said Bancker, "*we'll* take it standing up. I'm not so sure of the campus."

For once, Goodwin thought, Bancker was wrong. Campus and team—both were Grandon. The news that Roberts was out had caused excitement. But there had been no mutterings, no clamor. The campus, he was sure, would stand behind Bancker and the team. It was up to the team to keep its head and play the game.

The team carried on—on the surface at least—as though no disturbing event had happened. Rowe was moved in to Roberts' place and Conduct, a scrub back-field man, came over to fill Rowe's shoes at left half. The work was spiced with noisy enthusiasm and deep determination—and yet the machine began to slip. Where the Comet's kicking had been strong and uncannily accurate, Rowe's was weak and erratic. The ends, who had been driven to burning speed to cover Roberts' long punts, lost their sparkle and their snap. The whole team, feeling that something was melting

away, grew tense with anxiety. On Wednesday, the scrubs tore the varsity line to pieces. That day the locker room was a dreary place.

"Just at this minute," said Foxen, "I'd like to meet Horsey Mott."

Goodwin sent a startled glance the length of the locker room. The players, sunk in their own dark thoughts, had not heard. At any rate, the captain thought, the worst was over. Horsey had said the utmost that could be said. From now on he would simply try to keep a fire going under the stew he had started.

But the captain underrated Horsey's ability to make trouble and to rasp at a sore spot. That night's *Times* deftly planted the idea that Roberts had been dropped because Bancker resented his mounting popularity.

"It is rumored," Horsey wrote, "that Goodwin and Bancker have quarreled bitterly." Goodwin, after reading it, sat for a long time with his head in his hands. The next day it was "ROWE FAILS AS BLOND COMET'S SUCCESSOR."

Rowe, white-faced and miserable, came to Goodwin and to Bancker. "Horsey's right," he said with a catch in his voice. "I'll never make a kicker."

"I'm betting that you will," Bancker said quietly.

"You are?" Rowe's head snapped up. That afternoon he got away two kicks that were five yards better than anything he had done before.

And that night, the *Times* carried this:

THE *TIMES* DEMANDS TO KNOW—WHY WAS THE
BLOND COMET DROPPED? CZAR BANNER
MUST ANSWER

The pulse in Bancker's neck throbbed. "Must is a strong word," was all he said.

Next day Grandon played Valley Tech, and never had a chance. One of Rowe's punts was blocked, and that mishap led to disaster. The final score was 20 to 0. The *Times* carried a screaming headline: "GRANDON, MINUS BLOND COMET, EASY FOR VALLEY TECH," and another demand:

THE *TIMES* DEMANDS TO KNOW—WHY WAS
THE BLOND COMET DROPPED?
AFTER TO-DAY'S GAME CZAR BANCER MUST
ANSWER

There had been a strange quiet in the stands toward the end of the game. Goodwin, sweating and panting in an effort to stave off defeat, had not noticed it. The end of the struggle found him spiritless, the victim of a dreary reaction. To-night nothing seemed to matter. He bought a *Times*, scanned the headlines, passed the paper back to Foxen and led the way across the campus to the dining hall. Just as a waiter was bringing on food, Bloodgood said, "Here's Roberts." Goodwin went on eating. And then, suddenly, he was conscious that the dining hall had grown very quiet. He raised his eyes.

Roberts stood in the doorway, a nonchalant, careless figure. Leisurely, with a word here and a nod there, the fullback sauntered toward his place. Somebody started to applaud. Others took it up. In a moment the room was ringing with a tumultuous ovation.

Foxen's hand, under cover of the table, gripped Goodwin's knee. "Do you know what that means?"

The captain knew. His appetite was gone, but be-

cause he was sure that many eyes were watching him, he forced himself to eat. The campus—Grandon's campus—had gone over to Horsey Mott. The knowledge numbed him and turned him sick. It would go hard with Bancker now. Goodwin forced himself to stay at the table until he could join a group moving toward the doors. He melted into it, inconspicuous, unnoticed. Once outside he hurried to Bancker's lodgings.

"I expected it," Bancker said.

"From a Grandon campus?" Goodwin was aghast.

The coach nodded. "The students in general never see the problems and worries that lie behind the scenes. Horsey Mott has led them to believe that they have a legitimate kick."

"But he's doing it with lies," the captain cried hotly. "Why don't you tell the campus the real story why Trim was dropped?"

"It would be holding Trim up to scorn and humiliation," Bancker said. "Besides, I don't think the campus would understand." He spoke the last sentence wistfully.

The squad became grim and hard-eyed. Rowe went around with his jaws clamped, and every afternoon Bancker gave him a long session of kicking. Grandon broke abruptly into two camps—the football squad on one side, fiercely loyal to the coach; the campus on the other, passionately convinced that Bancker, grown accustomed to being the big gun at Grandon, had wrecked the team rather than see Roberts in the spotlight. At any time during the day a cry of "Yea, Roberts!" was likely to announce the appearance of the Comet. And, hovering on the outskirts like some chuckling shadow,

Horsey Mott continued his demand for an explanation and wrote of the cheers that followed Roberts.

It was a situation that could not go on. Goodwin, torn by anxiety over what might come next, could not drive from his mind the memory of Bancker's wistful voice. It was the first time he had ever seen the coach upset. If Grandon should lose again on Saturday—what?

Grandon lost to Harrison, 14 to 7. Again Rowe was the weak link. Twice, with no one near the receiver, he had chances to throw forward passes that would have broken up the game, and twice he heaved the ball weirdly and wildly. A voice from the stands bellowed: "We want Roberts."

Back in the locker room that cry rang in Goodwin's ears with an ominous echo. Sitting limply on a bench he made no move to get out of his sweaty, soggy uniform. Dressing meant that he would have to go out to the streets. Newsboys would be selling the football extra. He was—suddenly—afraid to read what the *Times* might say to-night.

Foxen nudged him. "Snap out of it, Good. You'll get a chill, sitting there in those damp togs."

The captain began to strip. The sting of the shower brought a measure of reality, an awakening sense of responsibility. Moping was a poor flag to wave in the face of the squad. He spoke to a player here, threw a word across to Condict, called to somebody at the far end of the room. Those who had hurried their dressing began to leave. The place thinned out. Presently Foxen and Condict went out together and left him alone. Slowly he sank back upon the bench and slumped again.

A sound at the door straightened his spine. It was Foxen, one hand behind his back. "Bancker gone?"

Goodwin nodded.

The hidden hand came into view. It held a newspaper. The captain leaped to his feet.

"The fools have called a mass meeting for next Wednesday night," Foxen said hoarsely. "Varsity Hall. They're going to demand Bancker's resignation. Do you get that? Those pinheads want to throw out the best coach—all I want is to meet Roberts to-night in the dining hall."

But at that moment Roberts, in a downtown restaurant, was having dinner with Horsey Mott. The sports editor had a copy of the *Times* at his elbow.

"Boy," he said with gusto, "when I go after a man, that man is as good as done. This mass meeting will just about blow the works. You'll be in next Saturday's game."

Roberts' hands moved as though they itched to feel a football. "It hasn't been easy, this waiting," he complained.

"These things take time," Horsey said soothingly. "First, we had to cook Bancker's goose. Well—it's cooked."

Roberts' face fell into a darkened scowl.

"Next Wednesday," Horsey said largely, "Bancker will be eating out of your hand."

Roberts started to say something, thought better of it, and began to eat. Bancker was whipped—no question of that. And yet, at that moment, the Blond Comet could not visualize Bancker as eating out of any man's hand.

In admitting to Horsey that waiting had not been easy, the Comet had uttered a bitter truth. He had thought that two or three days at most would be the limit of his exile. But the Valley Tech slaughter had been followed by the Harrison disaster, and Bancker so far had given no sign that he knew where he could put his hands on a player who could turn the tide. Yes, the coach was cooked. Wednesday night's meeting would attend to that. But in the Comet's heart was the galling conviction that, had Horsey not contrived to engineer the meeting of protest, he—Trim Roberts—would have been left to gather mildew.

Oh, but some day he'd make Bancker pay for this insulting neglect! To be ignored, to be flouted, to be treated like some raw substitute. . . . Even as his blood heated with resentment, something in him forced a reluctant admiration of the rugged, unbowed determination of the coach. Bancker had told him that he was out—and he had stayed out. He could not quite understand it. With the whole campus barking at his heels, the coach went his way in cool unconcern. Defeat left him unshaken.

"It's his big head that holds him up," Horsey said across the restaurant table. "He'd rather be a beaten Napoleon than a winner with somebody else getting the glad hand. He tried to make a bum out of you just for his own glory. Don't forget that."

"I won't," snapped Roberts. He hoped Bancker would come to the meeting. He wanted to see the man squirm. And then he wondered if Bancker could be made to squirm.

Over Sunday he was the campus lion. So many students came to his room that the gathering extended out into the hall. If this was what he got before Wednesday, what would it be after he went back to the squad? His dreams that night were pleasant.

In the morning his rosy plans were suddenly broken and scattered. By breakfast time, the whole campus knew that there would be no protest meeting at Varsity Hall on Wednesday night. Bancker had the hall for a football talk he was to give to high school players.

Roberts swallowed a cup of coffee and hurried from the dining hall. There was a public telephone station just off the edge of the campus, and his hand trembled and shook as he dropped a coin into the slot. Bancker was afraid of them—else why should he try to freeze them out? And if Bancker was afraid, that meant that he *could* be made to squirm. His rugged, unbowed determination had merely been a mask. Oh, when Horsey knew this—

The sports editor greeted his story with an oath. "Trying to muzzle us. There's your mealy-mouthed hypocrite. Always talking about the square deal, and playing the game, and sacrifices, and he sneaks in and robs us of our chance to talk."

"Can't we hold the meeting outdoors?" Roberts asked.

"An outdoor meeting wouldn't get over. You can't whoop things up. Too much noise with street cars and automobiles shooting around the edges of the campus."

"How about Thursday night?"

"There's nothing worse," Horsey growled, "than a

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meeting that has to be postponed. It loses half its punch. I don't know what's best to do. Give me a chance to think."

Roberts came out of the booth stewing with rage. The fraud! Strong man? Bah! A tyrant who fired a player because he had the power! A coward who was afraid to stand up and let Grandon hit back at him. A—

"Roberts!" said a voice in his ear.

The fullback spun around on his heel and, at sight of Bancker, his eyes blazed.

"You—" he began.

"I'll do the talking," Bancker said crisply. "Tell Horsey it's never wise to pick a date for a meeting without going through the formality of making sure he can have your hall. The football talk was arranged six weeks ago. However, if you and your friend think you have something to say, I have no desire to stop you from saying it. I'll move my crowd into one of the large classrooms. You can have Varsity Hall Wednesday night."

Roberts was dazed at the unexpected offer. "I—I don't understand—"

"I hoped you would," the coach said, and swept him with a level look and was gone. That look, clear and penetrating, left Roberts shaking. It was not what he had expected—not after the things the *Times* had printed during the past two weeks. Anger, rage, bitterness, he could have understood. But Bancker had swept him with eyes of pity. Bancker was sorry for him.

Why? Something deep within him, something that suddenly began to comprehend, tried to whisper a rea-

son. He shook his head savagely as though to shut out the inner voice. He had a class at eight-thirty. There was just enough time, if he hurried, to make it. Abruptly he decided to cut the class. He went to the telephone and put in another call for Horsey Mott.

"I've just met Bancker," he reported. "He says we can have the hall Wednesday night. He'll take his meeting somewhere else."

It was plain that the news was not to Horsey's liking. "I wish you hadn't told me about it," he snapped. "I had a good story ready—something that would have given Bancker a bad time.

"Now, I've got to frame something else. If Bancker gives you any more news keep it to yourself unless it's something that hands him a black eye."

Roberts was bewildered. "But I thought you'd want to know—"

"Sometimes," said Horsey, "we are interested only in news that plays right into our hands. Anyway, I'll find a way to handle this so it will give Bancker a cramp."

Horsey's way was in the *Times* that afternoon:

PUBLIC OPINION FORCES CZAR BANCKER
TO SURRENDER HALL

Roberts was shocked. Giving Bancker a cramp would have been to his liking. But deliberately twisting the truth—the inner voice that had tried to whisper to him that morning whispered a little louder now. Bancker had been white. It wasn't sporting to hold a white man up as something yellow. He went to a telephone and called Horsey again.

"Where did you get the idea that Bancker was forced into giving up the hall?" he asked.

Horsey chuckled. "That was a darned clever way to handle it, wasn't it?"

"It wasn't true."

The editor's voice changed. "Look here, Trim! Who's been trying to get you back on the squad?"

"You have."

"Then let me handle it my way." Horsey hung up the receiver.

That night Trim, with his door locked, brought out a batch of clippings from the *Times* and went through them. Within the day tremendous changes had taken place in the exiled fullback. Bancker had shocked him in one direction, and Horsey had shocked him in another—and out of this experience Bancker stood out the better man.

He read the clippings and, for the first time, saw things not as he wanted to see them but as they were. There was the story in which, announcing a star's suspension, Horsey had said that the campus was in an uproar of resentment. Roberts, looking back with clear eyes, knew that the story had been rot. The campus had shown no great amount of excitement until the team had lost. As for rebellion in the squad, and quarrels between Goodwin and Bancker—bunk. He folded the clippings slowly and put them away.

It was apparent to him now the tricks and traps that Horsey had employed to lead the campus to what was due to happen on Wednesday night. Jumping up, he began to pace the room. Horsey had called Bancker a faker, but would a faker, with his team losing game

after game, stand his ground as the coach had? Horsey said that Bancker wanted the limelight. If the coach wanted applause would he deliberately see his team beaten? Would he step aside so that the students could meet and demand his resignation? Were these the acts of a man who wanted to be king and claim the headlines?

"I wonder," Roberts cried out of a tortured heart, "if Bancker's been shooting square and I—" He did not complete the thought. He was afraid. That night he watched the table where the football squad ate—and envied them.

The thoughts that had taken possession of his mind would not let him rest. His imagination painted pictures of Bancker, quiet and cool; of Horsey, shrewd, loud-mouthed, boastful; of that last scene in the little office off the locker room and the things he had said to the coach. His face flushed. And then there came always the memory of the things that Horsey had written, things that were not true.

Horsey had preached "The others must think of the team, but you are a superman and must think of yourself." And yet he was gone, and the team was still there. At that moment he felt alone and weak, and the team loomed as something strong and impregnable. Dimly he began to see the things that held it together—loyalty, sacrifice, idealism. And dimly, too, he began to see that there was something bigger than himself.

Tuesday afternoon he found a note from Horsey in his room:

Get in touch with me. We've got to frame up what you ought to say Wednesday night.

What he ought to say! Roberts stared across the room. He did not telephone to the *Times*.

Wednesday afternoon he disappeared. Two frantic messages from Horsey failed to find him at his room. That evening he suddenly appeared upon the campus, tired and worn. The two messages from Horsey were on his table—he tore them up. And then he waited.

At eight o'clock he went to Varsity Hall. At sight of the crowd he caught his breath. With a touch of his old swagger he strode, amid thunderous applause, down the aisle to the platform. Horsey, sitting there, sprang up.

"Where have you been?" the editor demanded. "Didn't you get my messages? What's the matter with you—you're white. Here, grab this speech and read it over. It's hot stuff. It'll knock this crowd wild."

Roberts pushed the manuscript aside. "I don't need that." He walked down to the edge of the platform and raised a hand for silence. "Fellows!"

Abruptly the hall grew silent. Horsey, with a startled exclamation, tugged at his coat.

"Sit down, you fool! What are you trying to do, ruin everything?"

Roberts wrenched his coat free. The color came back into his cheeks. His sense of elation rose at the sight of the crowd before him. From the body of the hall came a startled murmur. Again he held up his hand. With his confidence fully restored, he began:

"Fellows, this meeting is a mistake. It should never have been called. Bancker isn't what he's been painted, and you ought to know it. Bancker's the biggest man at Grandon, and I'm ashamed of the part I've had in this

whole business. If this meeting is going to denounce anybody to-night, let it denounce me. I deserve it.

"Bancker's been panned for dropping me and for losing games. Maybe we'd have lost anyway. Bancker dropped me because I had it coming to me. I didn't obey his orders. I thought I could do as I pleased. Well, Bancker refused to let me get away with it.

"This meeting can do as it pleases about Bancker, but count me out. I threw him down when I was with the squad, but I won't knife him in the back now that I'm off."

As abruptly as he had begun, he ended and turned away from the staring sea of faces. Horsey sat in stupid, blinking bewilderment. The blond fullback passed the editor, stepped half-smiling down the platform steps and along the aisle. Somebody yelled, "You're all right, Trim," and somebody hissed. Then he was outdoors.

Swiftly he crossed to a building that showed lighted windows on the second floor. Bancker's meeting had not yet started. The coach, seeing Trim in the doorway and reading a message in his face, came out into the hall.

"Coach," Roberts burst out, "I've been a mutt. I just told that meeting at Varsity Hall the truth and walked out. I won't blame you a bit if you don't want me, but if you can use me I'm ready to come back, and obey orders, and play football."

Bancker asked no questions. He tried instead to read Roberts' face. It had a touch of the old arrogance—an appearance of satisfaction at playing a heroic part, at starring in a self-sacrificing rôle. Roberts had made amends, the coach gathered, but it seemed that the

player took too much satisfaction in it. He was still—Trim Roberts.

"The question," Bancker asked quietly, his heart heavy, "do I want you?"

Roberts looked up, covering his surprise. "I—I didn't think—of that."

"Suppose I tell you that you can come back but that I may not use you again this season?"

Roberts wasn't prepared for this. He was a star—he could help win games—he had counted on getting back at the game—at shining once more before the yelling fans—at making amends with touchdowns. He struggled inwardly. His head dropped. "I—" he muttered. "You—you're the boss."

Bancker looked at him searchingly. "Report to-morrow, Trim."

Roberts went to the scrubs, and the resentful squad let him have it. But he had steeled himself for that, and stood the mauling. Every time he carried the ball, somebody dropped him hard. The mental turmoil through which he had passed, the ordeal of walking into the locker room and facing the team he had tried to disrupt, took away his edge and left him with nothing but the will to try. Once he tried a shot for the goal posts from the twenty-yard line and missed by yards. Foxen laughed.

"Stop that," Goodwin barked sharply.

At the end of the afternoon the fullback was stiff and sore. He struggled against a rising tide of resentment—tried to tell himself that he had it coming. But blame it all, he was a star! He didn't need this stuff! He walked from the locker room alone, and Rowe stared after him.

"He's mad," Rowe said thoughtfully. "And still cocky."

"I guess we took it out of him to-day," Foxen said with satisfaction. Rowe shook his head. "I wish I could believe it."

A sort of stony silence greeted Roberts in the dining hall that night. He ate in silence and, after supper, went up to his room. He hadn't bothered to buy a *Times*, but voices, passing his door, told him that Horsey had flayed him for deserting his backers. No friends on the campus and no friends in the squad! He turned out his light, felt gingerly of his bruises, and went to bed to battle a bitter, lonely fight against his own temperament.

Next day Bancker used him to run back punts, and again the squad handled him savagely. Drive at him as they would, they could not slow him up or make him cringe at the moment of impact. Foxen, dropping him on the last punt, sprang to his feet, hesitated, and ended by holding out a helping hand. Roberts caught it and scrambled up.

"Thanks," he said briefly.

"By gosh," Foxen said in the gym, "I take off my hat to him. He's game."

Roberts, under the shower, showed the marks of the slaughter.

"Better let one of the rubbers go over you," Goodwin called across the room.

"Mere scratches," Roberts grinned airily. Rowe came over and sat beside him while he was on the rubbing table.

"Trim, I wish you'd look over my kicking and tell what I'm doing that's wrong."

"Sure—to-morrow," agreed Roberts, and then added with a touch of his old air of superiority, "but kicking's more natural ability than anything else."

Goodwin stared at the fullback disappointedly as the Comet went out the door. "Same old Trim," he sighed.

"I'm not sure," differed Rowe, "that he wasn't just camouflaging. He—feels pretty tough."

Saturday Trim sat with the substitutes and saw Grandon play Harwood to a scoreless tie. Monday he was back on the field. Twice that day he got away for long runs. The varsity, that had cut him down at will at the start, found it a harder job to handle him. Some of the old strut, the old swagger, came back to his stride. But in his face there was a wistful, hungry longing.

Bancker read it. "He'll be asking me to play him," the coach thought.

But the back asked for nothing. Bancker, at the end of one practice period, touched him on the arm.

"I'm taking some of the fellows to a picture show to-night," he said. "Care to come along?"

Care? Roberts turned his head away so that Bancker could not see the flush in his face. His eyes blinked.

Blanket-wrapped, heart-hungry he watched Grandon beat Allingham 7 to 0 and counted the spots where he could have run wild. And then they were headed for the big game with Stamford.

Twice that week Bancker gave him a short workout with the varsity. In his eagerness he fumbled, and broke out in a sweat of fear. Goodwin tried to steady him, patted his shoulder before the signal was called, croon-

ing low-voiced encouragement. Yet he fumbled again, and a scrub recovered the ball.

He felt that his last chance to get into the Stamford games was gone. At best it had not been much of a chance—he realized that. Bancker, fearing to use him further that day lest additional blunders might wreck his growing confidence in himself, sent him to the showers. He took it as a punishment, and went slowly to the locker room, sunk in dejection.

From a gym window he watched what was left of the practice. To-day there seemed something futile in the whole thing—something he could not grasp. He had deserted Horsey Mott and had come back to Bancker because it was the only thing to do—the satisfying, spectacular thing to do. The others—the players out there flashing through the scrimmages—were moved by something else. They gave and gave, and asked nothing better than to give. Even the night he had gone to Bancker there had been, in his mind, no thought of sacrifice. He had simply wanted to stand square in his own estimation.

His eyes picked out Goodwin. The captain was a problem. Three years on the varsity, three years in the backfield, and never a touchdown to his credit. Roberts couldn't understand it. With the ball near a score Goodwin had the power to call his own signal—and yet, apparently, he never had. Why? The Comet sighed, and shook his head, and turned from the window, baffled.

That feeling of futility, of something he had missed, was still with him when he went out with the team for the Stamford game. The substitutes, talking hoarsely, followed the course of the game, and he sat among them,

silent. The field before his eyes seemed part of a dream. The lines appeared to crawl into position, to break into sluggish knots as they scrimmaged, to arise and fall into position again. Finally Stamford, striking again and again at Foxen, managed to score. The kick after touch-down missed.

"Six for Stamford," said a voice.

Roberts awoke from the dream. Suddenly it was all real, the field, the straining players, and Grandon trailing. With hands clenched he watched the tide of battle, muttering to himself, praying and pleading. Once Grandon held on its five-yard line, and when the ball changed hands he found his muscles aching as though he had been taking the burden of the defense.

Rowe kicked, and he closed his eyes and relaxed. An instant later the substitutes were shrieking and rocking around him.

"They dropped it. Foxen recovered."

The Grandon stands rumbled and roared. Roberts shook and shivered. Through burning eyes he watched the uncertainty of the Stamford team, a milling about that told of upset nerves. It was a moment for boldness, and he held his breath for fear Grandon wouldn't see it.

But Goodwin, reading the situation, sent off a long forward pass—and Grandon carried the ball to the twenty-yard line.

"Here's where Stamford cracks," the substitutes cried gleefully.

But Stamford held. An attempt to skirt left end lost a yard, and a drive at the middle of the line lost another. Rowe dropped back to kick. He was right in front of the

posts, and the ball sailed true above the bar. The score was 6 to 3.

The crowd hailed the field goal with an outburst of song, but Roberts drew his blanket about his shoulders and slumped. Stamford was still ahead, and if Grandon couldn't score then against a demoralized team, what could she do when that team was steady?

The score was unchanged at the half—and it was still unchanged at the end of the third quarter.

For Roberts the game had become agony. Horsey's advice had been to think of himself; but to-day—at last—he was thinking of the team. In that final quarter Stamford, with her slender three-point lead, elected to play safe, and kicked, and kicked, and kicked. The full-back, rocking to and fro, groaned as each kick took the ball deep into Grandon territory.

The minutes raced away with agonizing speed. One of the substitutes had a stop watch; and after each play Roberts would glance at the dial in a sort of fascinated horror. Stamford kicked again, and Rowe caught the ball on his own thirty, where he was downed in his tracks.

"Four minutes," said the boy with the watch.

Rowe got up from the ground and stood swaying. Bancker, who all afternoon had followed the plays along the side lines, swung toward the substitutes.

"Trim!" he called sharply.

Roberts lifted his head, startled. He saw Bancker's beckoning arm and leaped clear of his blanket.

"Go in for Rowe," said the coach.

The Comet began to tremble, shaken by the memory of all those fumbles. Bancker laid a hand upon his

shoulder. Somehow, there was something about the touch that strengthened, and soothed, and made firm. He ceased to quiver.

"I'm sending you in for a touchdown," Bancker said quietly.

"Yes, sir," muttered Roberts, and was out on the field running toward the battle line of the two elevens.

He wore a headguard. That, in itself, was significant, for in the days when Horsey Mott was his god, he had played bare-headed so that his blond mop might be a trade-mark to the stands. The rooters, shouting his name with a sudden note of hope, forgot its past resentment in this possible promise of victory. Foxen grinned, and panted, and wiped his face with the sleeve of his jersey. Goodwin spoke hurriedly.

"It's up to you, Trim. Left tackle's their weak spot."

The signal was shrilled. Roberts, waiting behind the line, found his legs suddenly filled with tense and eager springs. The ball came back. The line tore a hole. He was through the opening with a desperate burst of speed.

Foxen was through with him. The Stamford left half loomed ahead and Roberts cut in toward the center and left that player to the Grandon end. In front of him, now, was only the full; behind him was pursuit. He swerved and led the full toward the side lines, and then suddenly reversed himself. The full, caught unprepared for the strategy, tried to check, stumbled, staggered and was out of it.

The maneuver had discarded one danger, only to raise another. Roberts' dodging, his change of direction, had given the pursuit its chance. He could hear a breath behind him—a breath that came in a whistling gasp. An

arm touched his waist. He tried to leap ahead. The arm slid down, tightened about his knee. He fell with a crash and rolled, and a hot, heavy body clung and rolled with him.

His own goal posts had been right behind his back at the start of the play, and now the Stamford goal line was just ahead. Goodwin shrieked in a delirium of encouragement.

"It's our game, fellows. Their twenty-five yard."

The stands sang and cheered and stamped in a wild outburst of joy.

Goodwin took the ball on the next play, and razored off left end for four yards. Stamford was watching Roberts, and the captain's dash was a surprise. They were still watching Comet when Condict smashed at center for three yards.

Stamford was swept by panic. These short gains were as deadly as the longer runs.

Goodwin gave the enemy no time to set itself and steady its nerves. His voice rose in a shrill call. He made a megaphone of his hands so that he could be heard above the roar of the crowd.

"Seventeen, 98, 62, 27!"

It was the Comet's signal for another slash at left tackle.

The line failed to make the hole, but the end had gone down. Roberts shot for this strip of open field. The Stamford half met him at the line, to be bowled over by a vicious straight-arm. Then Stamford players seemed to rise up out of the ground. A straight-arm took out another. Abruptly two pairs of arms were locked about him, and Roberts went down again.

"Their three-yard," Goodwin screamed above the din. "A minute and a half to play."

All at once, in all that welter of noise and pounding hearts, Roberts seemed to stand alone and to see things from a height of great clarity. Three yards from a score, and Goodwin's last game for Grandon. Goodwin who had never carried the ball over for a touchdown.

The captain's voice piped hoarsely. "Seventeen, 91—"

Roberts caught his breath. The 9, in the second numeral meant that it was his ball. He sprang out of place.

"Signal! Signal! Good!" He had the captain by the arm. "Carry it over yourself. It's your last game."

Goodwin's nerves were raw from the stress and anxiety of the game. He shook off the hand. "Who asked you to interfere? I'm running this team. Get back there."

"But Good—"

"Get back," the captain shouted.

Roberts went back to his place. The signal came over. "Seventeen, 91, 46, 35."

The pass from center was perfect. Roberts, storming straight for the line, found a demoralized defense. Stamford toppled and collapsed. Squirring past sprawling players, he was over the line before he was tackled.

The stands raved and rocked. Goodwin and his players leaped into the air in their joy, but Roberts was lost in the contemplation of a miracle. Three yards from a score, the captain's last chance, and refusing to carry the ball. He couldn't fathom it.

He kicked goal, and stared at Goodwin. A moment later the whistle shrilled for the end of the game. They

cheered Stamford, dodged the crowd, and ran for the locker room. Victory! Foxen, running at his side, pounded his back with a madly happy hand. But Roberts kept staring at Goodwin running up ahead.

The first wild flush of victory began to fade. The song in their hearts came down to a normal beat of satisfaction. Roberts, partly dressed, walked over to the captain.

"Why didn't you go over for the touchdown?" he asked in the voice of one groping in the dark.

Goodwin's nerves were now serene. "You wanted me to, didn't you? Thanks, Trim, but it wasn't the play."

"With four downs to go, three yards—"

"It wasn't the play. First, we didn't have four downs—we had just about a minute. Second, I was tired. I might have fumbled. You were fresh. You were the best bet."

"I see," Roberts said thoughtfully. He went back to his locker, picked up his shoes, and dropped down on a bench. With one shoe on, he stared straight ahead. A hand touched his shoulder.

"Good work, Trim," said Bancker.

The Comet's eyes filled with moisture, but he did not stir. The coach shook him.

"Trim! Snap out of it. Are you ill? Is anything wrong?"

He looked up, then, and stared wetly at Bancker. "No," he said after a silence, "everything's all right. I've just discovered what you've been trying to teach me all season."

THE WINNING POP

BY REX LEE

MR. "BUTTERBALL" Bartley waddled through the crowded hotel lobby with much dignity, considerable determination, and not a little difficulty.

The annual meeting of the two big leagues was being held, and on all sides players, officials, scouts and managers greeted him warmly. These greetings Mr. Bartley acknowledged with subtle condescension as befitted his position in the baseball world. Former big league catcher, minor league manager, and at present scout for the Gray Legs—thus he was known.

His brown derby was cocked on his head in a north-westerly direction, starting from a point immediately above his right eye and barely escaping his right ear, and he was arrayed as the lilies of the field.

He was of approximately the size and gorgeousness of a rajah's elephant decked out for a parade. Every once in a while, as he made his way through the lobby, he would fondle the ornate pin in his red, white, blue, green, and purple striped necktie. The pin, in gold and jewels, represented a baseball in a catcher's mitt and it was nearly life size. He finally reached a corner of the lobby, and there his ears pricked up noticeably as the well-known voice of Mr. Non-stop Niemeyer reached his ears.

"An' I'm tellin' you," the manager of the Hicksville Hardpans was saying, "that in them days it was tough."

Mr. Bartley steered his stomach around the corner and allowed himself to gaze at a group composed of four ball players, Non-stop Niemeyer, and the fourth assistant deputy business manager of the Canaries.

"Well," one of the ball players said doggedly, "I'm sayin' you gotta go some to beat St. Louis. They sure take their baseball serious out there. Why, the last game I played there this year I got a pop bottle bounced off my bean—"

"That must have been tough on the bottle," Mr. Bartley announced smoothly.

He succeeded in wedging himself into a big chair without having to sit more than a trifle off keel.

"You kids don't know nothin'," Non-stop said flatly. "Why, when I was playin' with the Mustang League in Wyoming twenty years ago, they used to have to call out the militia. I remember one time in the fall of '83 when—"

"You never happened to play ball in Texas, did you?" Mr. Bartley interrupted softly.

Non-stop Niemeyer was conceded to be the all-round, catch-as-catch-can, low-and-lofty champion talker of the baseball world. It was generally conceded that he was the most accomplished and prodigious liar since the days of Baron Munchausen. But Mr. Butterball Bartley had once entered into competition with him, and the memory of it was painful to Non-stop. Wherefore the Hicksville manager gazed at Mr. Bartley with a peculiar gleam in his good eye.

"That wasn't the place where you picked up Bossy Botsford, the Sauk Center Siege Gun, was it?" Non-stop demanded sardonically.

At the name of the renowned pitcher known as the Siege Gun, the players looked at Mr. Bartley with more intense interest.

"Well, no," said Mr. Bartley, "as far as that goes. But do you mean to say you never heard of the game that was played between the Luluville Broncos and the Shockhart Pill Wallopers?"

"No," snorted Mr. Niemeyer, and when he snorted, he snorted. "Nor nobody else, I presume."

"Well," Mr. Bartley said dreamily, leaning back in his chair and tilting his brown derby down over the bridge of his somewhat pug nose, "that was a game!"

Chairs were hitched closer. Non-stop Niemeyer was powerless to dampen the curiosity of the ball players, who scented an epic. The man who had brought to the attention of the world the Sauk Center Siege Gun was not to be taken lightly. Their eyes popped out until one could have knocked them off with a stick as Butterball, talking with husky softness, unfolded his prodigious narrative.

I had just quit catchin' on account of breaking my last finger, and was startin' to scout for the Canaries. It was in the fall of '94, if I remember right, or maybe it was '93. Anyways, the season was over and I'd took a look at a shortstop in San Antonio as my last official duty of the year. Then I hops down to Gonzara, a cattle town, to have a little visit with Goaty Gibbons.

Goaty used to play when I was just a kid breakin' in. He was the greatest place hitter that ever lived, Willie

Keeler or no Willie Keeler. All he needed was a guy's address and he could hit a ball intuh the feller's back pocket.

I hadn't seen him in fifteen years and I finds him sittin' on the front porch of his little frame house. He's got a little gray goatee, he's bald as an egg, and he's wearin' glasses. I finds out that he's just finished havin' a little battin' practice with his boy. He was tryin' to make a pitcher outta the kid.

"Yuh don't mean to say you can still hit, Goaty!" says I.

"Just as good as ever," he comes back. "If my dogs was any good and my legs would work faster than a turtle's, I could be in the big leagues yet."

We chats along for a few minutes and just as dusk is fallin' an automobile drives up. A couple of big guys in cowboy boots and Stetsons big enough to make a pup tent for a St. Bernard comes hobblin' up the walk on their high heels. One of 'em has a mustache that looks like handle-bars, and he carries a mean look in his eye. The other feller is small and bandy-legged, and both of 'em has got six shooters strapped down to each leg.

The feller with the mustache spits a cloudburst of tobacco juice which practically ruins a passing ant, picks off a grasshopper on the other side of the walk, and says, slow and easy, "Am I talkin', by any chance, to Mr. Gibbons?"

"You are," says Goaty.

"Well, we been informed that Mr. Bartley is visitin' you," says the tall feller, tilting back his hat. "You ain't him, are you, stranger?"

I commenced to feel kind o' funny, somehow. One

peek at that cow town had made me decide to walk slow and easy during my stay, for they had playful habits with their guns in them days. I took three gulps and says finally, "I'm him."

"Well, now, ain't that lucky?" says Handlebars, with relish. "We got a job for yuh."

"Yeah?" says I. "Well, I'm on vacation."

"That's all the better," says the little feller. "Go ahead an' tell him, Luke."

"Well, the idea is this," says Handlebars, leaning against the porch railin' an' playin' with the butt of his gun. "We come from Luluville, thirty miles northwest, and the annual baseball game between Luluville and Shockhart is goin' to be played just three days from now—on Saturday afternoon."

"Well," says I, "what of it?"

Handlebars looks down at me, and I ain't sure, but I think he's grinnin' beneath that foliage.

"This here game," he goes on, "is important. In fact just about the whole town of Luluville'll change hands if Luluville don't win. Sim Edwards, the mayor, bet the Mansion Hotel against John Clarkson's Shockhart dairy, and old man Pettigrew has put up a department store and four houses against the Shockhart National Bank, just to give you an idee of the bettin' on that game."

"That," says I, "looks to me as though you people took your pastimes to heart."

"We do," the little feller breaks in. "Just the mere idee of Shockhart winnin' makes a Luluville man tough to get along with. This year it's worse than ever. Last year was pretty quiet on account of there bein' an

epidemic of diphtheria around. There wasn't but five men killed, was there, Luke?"

"No, six," Luke corrected him, "if you count in Eb Snyder. O' course, he didn't die for several months."

"I wasn't countin' him," agreed the smaller man.

Well, I commenced to feel like I hadn't ate for a long time.

"An' o' course I wasn't thinkin' of fellers like Sam Hardy or Bill Thomson. Those two," he explained to me, "can't walk so good yet, but they wasn't real casualties."

"It strikes me," says Goaty, "that it would be a good idee if I put up a dugout somewheres and watched that game."

"Now, Mr. Bartley," says Luke, "the situation is this. Yesterday we had us a swell team. We had Dan Luckberry from Chicago, the shortstop came from the Eagles in New York, we brings Jack Crandle from New Orleans, and the outfield comes from San Francisco, all in one herd."

As them names, three of which I knew, filters through his mustache, I'm gaspin' like a fish out o' water.

"Did you say this was the Luluville team?" I asks him weakly, and Handlebars nods. Believe me, he had named an all-star outfit!

"We mean to put one over on Shockhart, because last year Shockhart rings in a big league catcher and a pitcher. They won five thousand head of cattle, the Carlisle ranch, and half of the main business block of the town. Besides, they got five Luluville men, cold turkey, against our two. O' course, a lot of us was sick with the diphtheria, like I said."

"Too bad," I says. "That made the game just a formality, didn't it?"

"Almost," agrees Handlebars. "But now what do you think the dirty dogs went and done? Our team was staying at the Mansion House, bein' as none of 'em lived in Luluville, an' Shockhart must have got to the cook and poisoned their food. Every one of 'em is in bed sicker'n dogs, an' the doctor says there's no way of 'em gettin' up before a week or ten days, so we got to play Shockhart with a pick-up team, we got to win, an' you're the answer. You coach the team, get me, and figure out a way of winnin'. You know all the tricks—you're a big leaguer. If we win, you get two thousand five hundred dollars, cash!"

"Suppose," I stammers, "we lose?"

"Well," Handlebars says, "that might make the boys a little peevish. I should advise you, stranger, to win."

"Pardon me," I says. "I don't think I care for the job. My heart ain't been so good lately and besides that my dandruff is bothering me somethin' terrible—"

I stops as Handlebars draws his gun, slow. There's a spittoon on the far end of the porch and he throws down the gun in a sort of melancholy way, and, before you could say Jack Robinson, he'd shot that spittoon sky high.

"Oh, I reckon you'll take the job," he drawls. "We might just as well start out for Luluville now and get under way, what say?"

I looks at Goaty. His eyes is shinin' behind his glasses an' that little white goatee of his is fairly bristlin'.

"I—I reckon—we had," I says.

An' if you think I felt happy at the chance to make two thousand five hundred bucks, you'd prob'ly give me credit for doin' a tap dance from the death cell to the electric chair.

"Say, listen," Goaty pipes up, and the spry old devil hops to his feet.

He's about half as big as a minute and so short he'd have to stand on a stepladder to pick a feather off a duck's stomach, but he's all solid nerve, and maybe he needed money pretty bad. Anyway, he says, "How much would you give a player that made a hit every time he came to bat, Big Boy?"

Handlebars looks him over careful.

"I reckon," he drawls, "that each hit would be worth about two hundred bucks. If we put you in and you didn't make good, we'd bury you without expenses."

"Well," says Goaty, "I'm going with you, Butterball, and if I can make my legs move, I guess you can use me, can't you?"

"Listen, Goaty," says I, "yuh got a family. While yuh ain't in the prime of youth, there's many a good year o' livin' ahead of yuh. I ain't got nobody, so I won't be missed—"

"Listen," says Goaty, his eyes snappin', "Shockhart's used tactics that ain't on the level. That gives us lots of leeway, don't it? I got some idees. You say Shockhart's the better team, Mister?"

"Yeah," nodded Handlebars mournfully, "but the money's done been bet."

"By to-morrow," says Goaty, "if you got three men that can hit anything I may have a few pesos up myself."

An' that's how, fifteen minutes later, we drives off for the game that made ridin' up San Juan Hill behind Teddy, a few years later, seem like a great relief to me.

There ain't no use in goin' into details about the next three days except to tell yuh that I was guarded night and day so that I couldn't get away. Every time I turned around quick I felt a new gun stuck into me.

On Saturday afternoon at two-thirty the game was ready to start, and there ain't never been a crowd before or since like that one. Shockhart had moved to Luluville for the game. They were lined up along the third base line. The women and children was in the rear, but the first four lines had about eight hundred men and sixteen hundred guns in 'em. On the first base line, Luluville was waiting in the same formation.

Goaty and me hadn't been idle. I'd took one look at the team I had to work for and had scouted the Shockhart Pill Wallopers besides. I found out that they wasn't so hot, but they had a big red-headed pitcher that had worlds of smoke. He had a hop on his fast one like a scared grasshopper.

I'd tried my best to get some boys from San Antone and around, but it seems that this here annual slaughter was known all over Texas. I finally gets three old ball players for second base, shortstop, and center field—they was so broke they'd have gone over Niagara Falls in a peanut shell for five bucks.

My first baseman weighs two hundred and twenty pounds and has a long red beard. He can't run and he can't throw, but he can hit and he can catch the ball. The third baseman was only about four feet high, and he played with two guns on and a pipe in his mouth. The

left fielder was a young feller, pretty good. And I was goin' to use Goaty in right.

Goaty and me had made several preparations to win the game, as I've said, and there wasn't no doubt in our minds about what would happen if we didn't. If there had been, old Handlebars would have dispelled it. He comes up to me just before the game and says soft-like, "I been talkin' to the boys. You've got to win, Bartley. If yuh lost, we'd have to start a new town tuh live in. There ain't but one house in town that ain't bet."

I nods. I can't say much, but I asks him to get me the captain of the Pill Wallopers. This here captain is about six foot and he's their catcher. When he ain't catchin' he wears a sombrero—even at bat, I finds out later. Goaty and me had figured out the idee I was goin' to spring on account of Goaty not bein' able to run at all.

"Listen," I says, "our right fielder hurt his leg. Got any objections to him playing on horseback?"

I points out the advantages to Shockhart, and o' course they seen 'em right away. A fielder on horseback, they figured, couldn't do nothin' except overtake the ball.

I had to use Goaty for his hittin' and we'd made several preparations especially for him. Bein' a Texan, he had ridden since he was a kid, and he had a cow pony that could read his thoughts. So the game starts with Goaty sittin' on the cow pony in right field.

Just as the first Shockhart batter starts to the plate, the mayor of Luluville, who had a voice like the bull o' Bashan, comes up to the plate. He's an old gray-headed feller with a couple of cannons strapped on him and another one bulging under his left shoulder. He

raises his hand, and there ain't a peep from the crowd.

"We got a proposition to make," he yells. "How about a gentleman's agreement of no shootin', no matter what happens, before the game is over?"

Shockhart talks it over and they finally agree. I was doin' the catchin' for Luluville, of course, and I had me two pitchers. One was a young feller that couldn't do nothin' but throw 'em straight and fast, and the other one didn't have nothin' but a round-house curve. I was usin' the speed merchant first.

Out in center field, 'way back, we'd stuck up a great big board. Two men was workin' round the board as though they was paintin' a sign, an' they had a piece of canvas as big as the board was. This here canvas was painted black, and there was about a hundred round white spots about the size of a basketball on it, besides. As Shockhart comes to bat these fellers puts this canvas up over the board and seems to be fussin' with it. What a background that was! I couldn't scarcely see the ball when it came up, an' the first three Shockhart batters didn't even get a whiff of it. When the baseball came whizzing down to the plate, it looked like a hundred balls, high, low, and all over!

When we came to bat these men way out in center field takes the canvas down an' pretends to be monkeying with it on the ground, leaving us a green background so we could see the ball good.

Well, anyways, in the first innin' I saw how the game was goin' to go.

Our first baseman, the feller with the red beard, named Tompkins, comes up to the plate and sloughs one down to the third baseman. Third baseman barely

gets it and makes a throw to first. Tompkins gets there about the same time, and he collides with the Shockhart first baseman, a big guy with only one gun on, and knocks him kickin'.

Tompkins goes on for second. The next minute the Shockhart first baseman is up. He leaves the ball on the ground and takes out after Tompkins. He chases Tompkins all the way round the bases. He starts to jerk for his gun but Tompkins, who can outrun him, is lookin' over his shoulder and has his own gun out, too, so that neither one of 'em dares to shoot.

On the way round third, Tompkins runs into the Mexican third baseman. Everybody forgot about the ball. This Mexican leaps up in the air, gives a kind of a scream, pulls out a knife long enough to row a boat with, and takes out after Tompkins, too. When Tompkins gets to the plate for a home run the rest of our team is there with their guns out, and for a minute it looks bad.

But cooler heads prevailed and the game resumes with the mutual agreement that all players be unarmed. A wheelbarrow was rolled up and everybody chucked their artillery into it. There was fifteen six shooters, three machetes, four ordinary bowie knives, and a hatchet.

Well, the game goes on and there ain't another score. There wasn't much trouble until Shockhart's half of the fourth. This here first baseman of theirs—he sure could hit—laid into one and sent it out towards right field. Old Goaty starts with the crack of the bat, ridin' like mad. Way back of him there was a fence, an' I could see the ball was goin' to clear the fence. His cow pony

jumps the fence, and, just at the top of the jump, Goaty stands up in his stirrups and spears the ball.

That was the most sensational catch you or anybody else ever seen. There was some trouble about it, but, after all, when grounders went out there for ordinary hits, old Goaty had to climb down off his horse to get the ball, and they got an extra base. Anyhow, it was all agreed on, and they couldn't go back on their word.

In the fifth innin', though, they gets wise to that movable background. When they come in from the field, they have a short session on their bench. Then the captain goes over and says a few words to the Shockhart troops on the side lines. A minute later the mayor of Shockhart, a little bit of a feller, signals to the mayor of Luluville. They meet out in the middle of the field, each one with six bodyguards, and all the troops on the alert. I was called over and the Shockhart mayor says, easy-like, "That there board wasn't in center field till you came to town, stranger."

"Yeah," says I. "I don't know nothin' about it. I don't live here."

"No," says the mayor of Luluville. "What can we do about it? We got no control over those men."

"Ain't you?" says this little Shockhart guy. "Well, we'll see what we can do."

I feel awful bad for those men we got on the sign, but there wasn't nothin' to do. My sympathy was wasted, though, at that. The delegation from Shockhart didn't get started into the outfield before those two hired hands started runnin'. The Shockhart men came back and the game goes on.

The second they had that background hazard re-

moved, action started. They made three runs in the sixth and was only saved from makin' a million by Goaty. The bases were full and two out when their first baseman makes a single. Goaty rides in on the dead gallop. He spears the ball on the bounce without getting off his horse, an' beats the batter to first base. He rode fast. There was some argument about that, too.

Well, I don't see any way of savin' me and Goaty's life. Shockhart is getting noisy and firin' their guns into the air already, and Luluville is awful quiet. Every time a feller like Handlebars catches my eye he starts to pick his teeth with a gun. I didn't know what to do. There wasn't none of our players seemed to be able to do any real hittin' against that other pitcher. I had one more ace up my sleeve but I was kind of scared to use it until I had to.

We got a break in our half of the sixth. Our little third baseman gives me the idea. He comes up to bat and yells to this husky pitcher of theirs, "Come on, horse thief, stick one over an' I'll knock your block off with it."

This pitcher is a little hot-headed. He drops the ball and starts for the plate. Our third baseman jumps forward, wavin' his bat and yellin', "I been waitin' ten years for a chance to take one good swipe at you!"

The pitcher stops with that bat swingin' before his face and goes back to the box. The next second he rips one down and wings the third baseman right in the side. I could see he done it on purpose, an' that gives me the idee.

"You and me's meetin' right after the game, you

long-legged skunk!" yells our third baseman, as he limps down to first.

In a minute I'm busy. The shortstop is the next batter and he has his instructions in two seconds less than nothin'. First of all we surrounds him and sticks a sweater in his shirt to pad his left side. He was a right-handed batter. He comes up to the plate wavin' his bat.

"You can't throw a stone fast enough to break a window," he sneers at this red-headed pitcher. "Try to put one over an' see what happens to it. If you can't throw that far, come closer!"

The pitcher looks as though he'd like to eat a barrel of nails, ties himself in seven knots, an' throws the ball. Sure enough, it planks the shortstop pretty.

"If I can't break a pane of glass, I can sure break a couple o' ribs," he yells.

The shortstop goes down to first and the third baseman moves up. Well, to make a long story short, we turned that pitcher into a lunatic with our kiddin', an' he hits five men straight, forcin' in two runs. I'm next to bat an' the son-of-a-gun tries to hit me, too. The rest of the Pill Wallopers team is tryin' to labor with him, but it seemed like everybody was afraid of him. I seen some Shockhart men fingerin' their guns as though they was going to shoot him, but apparently they didn't have nobody else to pitch.

They sure was tough, that Shockhart gang. There wasn't a hummin' bird in their town that couldn't lick a hawk from anywhere else, and the only robin I heard sung bass.

Well, I didn't say nothin' to this pitcher because I aims to find one and maybe hit it. Luluville was leapin'

around, firin' their guns in the air. The little boys, especially, was goin' wild. They was beggin' their fathers for their guns so they could work off a little of their youthful spirits, and some of the daddies felt so good they let 'em have 'em.

The pitcher seems to come to himself, seein' I don't say nothin' to him, and he lays 'em in. I picks out one and rides it to left for a single, which should have brought in two men, but one of our runners takes a smack at the Shockhart third baseman when he's roundin' the base and is put out at home after the fight was over. So that left it a tie.

In the seventh they makes two runs and we don't make none. In the eighth they make two more, largely on account of a hard hit ball knocking the pipe out of our third baseman's mouth, takin' his false teeth with it. He stopped to find 'em and two runs come in.

Well, it was do or die in the eighth, for reasons I'll explain later. Once again Shockhart was goin' wild with joy and Luluville was loosenin' up their holsters. I had to pull what I was goin' tuh because Goaty came up that innin'. One of the things we'd done durin' those three days was to fix up the infield between the plate and the pitcher's box with a concrete mixture. It was hard as a rock and built for just one purpose.

The left fielder was the first man up, an' I drags out special bat we'd had made, which was about two inches thicker than any other bat the game ever seen. The Pill Vallopers didn't notice it, apparently, which I was opin' they wouldn't.

I was sweatin' blood. I couldn't move without five or six men, includin' Handlebars, watchin' me steady.

Goaty, too, because he hadn't made but one hit. He'd laid off deliberately on account of the fact that one run around the bases would ruin him, an' he was just waitin' for the proper time.

"All right, mister," says I. "You know what we have been practicin'. Now's the time."

I'd had that team swingin' down for three days, till they could hit better that way, I guess, than any other. I couldn't pull what I was gonna pull before on account of Shockhart gettin' wise. I didn't want to do it until the ninth innin', but I couldn't take no chance with Goaty comin' up this innin'.

The left fielder steps to the plate an' the Shockhart pitcher, who was gettin' a little bit tired, lays it down the alley. This here left fielder just raises his bat off his right shoulder and smacks down on the ball. He hits it and it hits the ground about six feet in front of the plate. Well, sir, that ball bounced a hundred and fifty feet in the air. Half of the infield was camped under it, waiting for it to come down, but our man gets two bases before it hits the ground again. They figures it's a fluke.

Our second baseman comes up an' does the same thing. The ball hits the ground about ten feet to the left of the pitcher and bounces clean over the head of the shortstop.

The third man up was the pitcher, and he couldn't hit a lick. I tells him just to bunt, which he does, and I'm dog-goned if that didn't bounce high enough so's he could beat it out. The Shockhart pitcher jumps in the air, clicks his heels together, yells like a monkey, and is goin' nuts with all these bad breaks. Here the bases is

full, nobody out, an' he don't know what to make of it.

The shortstop, a pretty fair hitter, is up next. This big bat, yuh understand, ain't fit for ordinary hittin'. Too big an' heavy. He comes up, smashes one almost straight down, and while the catcher is waitin' for it, the first run comes in. The bases are still loaded an' nobody out.

Next comes Goaty.

"Well, Goaty," says I, "get those spectacles tied on your nose an' see what yuh can do."

The bald-headed little squirt stalks to the plate with his own bat on his shoulder. Luluville is goin' nuts. Pistol shots fill the air an' then, sudden-like, there comes a big quiet.

We'd placed a little bit of a ridge fifteen feet ahead of the plate, an' the greatest place hitter the big league has ever seen is comin' to the plate. He can hit 'em anywhere! He straightens his spectacles—they are tied on to his nose—waggles his beard, and crouches. The first one is wide. The second one is over the corner of the plate, waist high, but the Luluville umpire calls it a ball. He called everything a ball that wasn't hit at. If we hadn't had that break we'd have been a mile behind. At that, though, the Shockhart umpire, who'd done the first half of the game, was just as bad, so it was pretty even.

On the third pitch Goaty swings down. He meets the ball square and the ball hits that specially prepared ridge in front of the plate. Well, sir, it bounced back over the catcher's head, goin' higher an' higher, clean over the heads of the crowd and a bunch of cow ponies that was tethered back there, across a road, a house, an'

into some scraggly bushes that covers a vacant lot. There was a few mesquite trees, too. It was a perfect home run backwards. An' we had in our own umpire, so there wasn't any question about the legality of it.

Well, old Goaty starts out. As I seen him run I wishes I'd arranged to let him bat on horseback, too. The catcher and the pitcher are leapin' through the crowd after the ball. It takes Goaty longer to get down to first than it would have took a turtle to go all around the bases. By the time he gets to second the whole Shockhart outfield has reached that there vacant lot and is searchin' for the ball. Half the Shockhart crowd starts over to help find it, but the Luluville bunch pulls their guns an' holds 'em back.

Halfway between second and third Goaty has to stop and take a breather. Then he walks as far as third. He tries to run home, but he can't make it, and crawls the last twenty-five feet on his hands and knees. We was one run ahead, but that was all we got.

That there Shockhart pitcher was so mad he couldn't see straight, an' I never seen a ball come across the plate as fast as he throwed it, except when the Sauk Center Siege Gun was playin'.

"Listen, Goaty," says I, in all the bedlam, "if these babies should make a run now, we're sunk. I know what I'm gonna do." I tells him. Just for the minute that Luluville's goin' crazy I figure I can get away with it.

I goes over to the captain of the Shockhart team, a six-foot-six cowboy, an' says, "I'm playin center field an' I'm playin' it on horseback, because I hurt my leg. O. K. with you?"

"Sure," says he, with blood in his eye. He figured that was a break for him, which it was.

I fixes it up with Handlebars. He's feelin' great. I borrows his horse and rides out to center field, puttin' the center, who could catch a little, behind the bat. I sent the curved ball lad in to pitch, and hoped for the best.

Well, sir, the first two of those Shockhart men went out, comin' up against that curve so sudden-like, an' that brings the first baseman to bat. On the first pitch he swings, an' as nice a home run as ever left a bat was archin' over Goaty's head. I start ridin', an' ridin' fast. O' course it looks like I was after the ball, an' Goaty, oo.

We made the fence, went over it and covered a quarter mile of the mesquite as fast as the horses would carry us. That hit tied the score and we didn't have a Chinaman's chance to win, so Goaty an' me kept ridin'.

Mr. Bartley's tone, husky with sentiment, ceased. He gazed absently into the distance as though still in Texas. The ball players looked at each other with their mouths open. Finally one said, hesitantly, "That there must have been a long hit."

"Well," said Mr. Bartley gently, "Goaty an' me was still lookin' for the ball in San Antonio that night, an' that was forty miles away."

He rose to his feet majestically and cocked his derby at the precise angle on his head that suited him.

"How'd the game come out?" ventured another awe-struck ball player. Mr. Non-stop Niemeyer was devoting himself exclusively to the gentle pastime of snorting.

"Tie, so I hear," stated Mr. Bartley. "Somebody on

the Luluville side shot the fellow that made the home run just as he was roundin' third. They battled till it was dark. The next day the two mayors agreed that the run ought to score and the game to be played over. They found they couldn't play it that year, however, because every ball player in the two towns was a cripple."

He turned as though to go.

"Seems like if Goaty took so long to go around them bases, Shockhart should have found the ball an' got him out anyways," suggested one of the audience.

"Well," Mr. Bartley said judiciously, "in ordinary circumstances they would. By the time they got there, though, that there ball was in the pocket of any one of six men Goaty an' me had planted in the rear for just such a purpose. Goaty never took no chances on things like that."

Mr. Bartley's huge frame was about to turn the corner when a last question was flung at him by the resentful Mr. Non-stop Niemeyer.

"I'd like to take in one of them games sometimes," he said sardonically.

"They ain't playin' 'em any more," Mr. Bartley told him gently. "After the next game, which only went four innin's, there wasn't a man left in either town over twelve or under sixty. In them days," he went on, paying a tenderly melancholy tribute to the past, "baseball was a man's game. St. Louis! The Mustang League! Huh! An' nowadays I even know fellers who call themselves ball players that put talcum on their faces after shavin'!"

He waddled away, head bent in sorrow over the passing of the good old days.

THE CODE OF A CHAMPION

BY FREDERIC NELSON LITTEN

NIGEL, Ross Vincent's soft-eyed setter, should have been a champion. But that pleading black nose of his was blind.

He never found a bird unless he stumbled on it. Pitiful—to see him crash into a brush heap and start a convey of quail drumming. He'd check and snap into a point, steady as a rock. But he was *seeing*, not *scenting*.

He should have been a champion. In the Field Dog Stud Book, he was set down as Black Diamond's Nigel, register number 96281, and his blood lines ran back to Koh-i-nor, winner of the All-American more than ten years ago.

Field dog men remember Koh-i-nor because, in the first ten minutes of that match, he hung up going through a barbed wire fence, but carried on two hours to win the stake with blood running from a five-inch slash along his ribs.

Nigel, too, had the heart of a champion, as well as the build and the speed. But he lacked the delicate, keen scent a champion must, above all, have. So, when he was two years old, his wealthy owner sold him to his field dog handler down at Pineknot in north Louisiana for his winter's board.

The handler, Matt Syder, had started Nigel in four derby trials that fall and the setter had failed to show

a nose for birds, though he was faster than a prairie fire.

In January, Matt Syder fell sick with rheumatism. Dr. Vincent of Pineknott pulled him through and took Nigel as full payment for his bill, which was fifty dollars for twenty bleak, wet trips and the necessary medicine.

Doctor Vincent's boy, Ross, was cotton farming on five acres of cut-over just outside the town of Pineknott, and his father sent the setter out to him. It's wonderful quail country there in the piny woods, but hard going for both dog and hunter. Ross used to follow Nigel on a tough, speedy little horse. Even then the dog would lose him when the fields were wide and open—he was that fast.

But the first season that Ross had him he failed to stand a bird—just ran blind into them all. Yet he tried and tried again. A stauncher heart no setter ever had.

He was what dog handlers call a wide-running dog; would range a half-mile strip of country, casting back and forth in front of Ross, going at top speed for two hours, and never tire. Those days, despite his handicap, the dog learned much—growing bird-wise, finding where the quail were likely to lie. With that rare intelligence of his, he was teaching his eyes to work for his nose.

At the beginning of his fourth hunting season, Nigel began to stand a quail occasionally, not by scent but by marking a flushed covey. He would creep up; "road" until his keen eyes caught the tremble of a brown wing beneath a bush or in a thicket; then freeze to point while Ross dismounted and kicked out the bird. Singles only.

he would have to start a covey, watch them scatter, before his strategy would work.

Ross grew very proud of Nigel. He told of the setter's prowess, and soon it came to the ears of Matt Syder and he began to regret his bargain with old Doctor Vincent. Nigel was a famous breed and Syder knew that with even a fair record in the field, the dog could easily be sold to some rich northern sportsman for a good round sum.

So the trainer turned over in his mind many schemes for getting back the dog. Not honorable schemes. Syder was unlike most men who make their living handling dogs. In the main, these men love dogs above all else. But Matt Syder wanted money and a name.

He had a reputation as a pointer handler; he turned out field trial winners—though some hinted that the press said about his training methods the better. He wanted a reputation as a setter man, too. Still more, he wanted the money Nigel might bring.

He was determined to have the dog.

So he called on Dr. Vincent and offered to buy back the setter at sixty dollars. The old doctor sent him to see Ross. Now Ross Vincent, at the time, needed money desperately to pay a note due on his little farm. By instinct, however, he disliked Syder, and Nigel had a big share of his heart. At first he flatly refused to sell. But finally Syder offered one hundred dollars—just the sum Ross needed.

"Syder, that's a lot of money to pay for a dog without a nose," he said. "What will you do with Nigel? Sell him to some sport up North who'll mistreat him when it turns out he can't find birds?"

Syder shook his head. Lied.

"Ross, that's a show dog. He'd be a bench winner if he was plumped up a little and his coat worked on. I reckon it would help my standing up North to bring home a few blue ribbons with a setter. I'm known only as a pointer man. No, I wouldn't sell him, nor use him in the field, much."

This was a double lie. Syder doubted the stories Ross had told of Nigel's standing quail by sight, but he thought the dog's scent was tardily developing and intended to work Nigel hard and bring it out. Then he could ask his own price for the setter.

But his words satisfied Ross. The boy said reluctantly:

"I need money, Syder; otherwise I wouldn't sell Nigel's not just a dog to me. I've watched him figure out his way to handle birds, and fight through against a big handicap. He's a game fellow, Syder."

Nigel was standing by, and when Ross paused and looked down, the setter touched his hand softly with his pink tongue. Ross gave Syder a long searching glance. "You'll treat him well?"

Syder wiped a half grin of contempt from his face.

"I don't make pets of dogs, young fellow. He'll get meat rations—you can see him any time you want to drive out. My place ain't dog-heaven. I'm offering you a long price and you won't hurt my feelings if you turn it down." He had been studying Ross shrewdly and knew the boy would sell.

And so in the end Syder went off with Nigel on leash following obediently as a well bred setter should. But the dog gazed back across his shoulder at Ross Vincen

standing in the cabin yard, a piece of paper in his hand. Presently the boy, with a bitter gesture, crushed the check, thrust it in his coat and turned away.

For a month Ross saw nothing of Nigel though he thought of him constantly and missed the gallant, faithful dog almost as he would a human comrade. The setter is a dog which has the insouciant high courage and the innate gentle courtesy for which the knights of old were famed. Small wonder that day after day Ross Vincent rued his bargain with Matt Syder, and longed for Nigel.

On a night in late November, the dog came home. Ross had that day delivered the last of his cotton to the gin, and in his cabin in the fields was checking the load tallies. It had grown cloudy before sundown and a breeze had risen. At first Ross thought the little moaning sound outside was wind in the live oaks, but its steady repetition puzzled him and after a time he pushed his papers back and, stepping to the door, opened it.

Nigel lay there on the field stone threshold in the lamplight. The flat slab beneath his head was a dark crimson with his blood. A great patch of silky fur was torn loose from his breast and dripped redly. Across his long muzzle a deep gash had ploughed. Only half open were the eyes that looked up at Ross. Their luster was pain-dimmed, and when the boy knelt down the setter's pink tongue sought his hand—it seemed with a last trusting gesture.

Ross had only one thought—Nigel must not die. Gathering the dog up in his arms, he climbed the fence into the cotton and cut desperately across fields to his

father's house. Doctor Vincent was at home and, without asking questions, took the dog and set to work. He worked fast. There was a severed artery that made it needful to make haste. Nigel quivered at times as the stitches went deep, but when the bandages were wrapped about his eyes, he licked the doctor's hand, trying gallantly to say thank you. Then the shining needle sent him off to sleep, and Ross asked:

"Will he pull through?"

The old doctor shrugged.

"The scales may tip either way. Best, perhaps, if he never wakes up. One eye's gone. Maybe both." He picked up something from the enameled surface of the table. "Number 8 Chilled, at close range. How did it happen, Ross?"

Ross, staring at him, echoed the words. "Number 8! You mean—it's a gunshot wound?"

Doctor Vincent frowned.

"Of course—"

The boy's eyes were suddenly ablaze.

"It's Syder," he said thickly. "I'd heard that he'd use a gun to break his dogs, but I didn't believe it. Now Nigel—"

He stumbled to the door. The doctor knew that Ross was meeting a crisis. He called:

"Wait—Ross! Where are you going, lad?"

Ross turned. Tears he did not try to check streamed down his cheeks. But there was no weakness in the tight clenched jaws.

"To find Matt Syder," he said grimly, and was gone.

By then it was close on midnight. The wind had blown the clouds away and a full moon lighted up the

lusty road. As Ross turned down Syder's lane a chorus of dogs in the kennels bayed and yipped, bounded against the wire fence. He knocked heavily on the door. Waited. Hammered it again with both fists.

Then a light flared and presently Matt Syder opened the door a cautious crack, saw it was only Ross Vincent, and stepped out. He was barefooted and had drawn on a pair of corduroys over his night clothes. His eyes were blurred with sleep.

"What's the idee," he grumbled, "wakin' a man this time o' night? What's wrong?"

"Nigel," answered Ross, his voice high, unsteady.

"Nigel?" repeated the dog handler. Then his eyes narrowed, became defensive, cruel. "Oh, that dog. Well, what of *him*?"

"I've come to buy him back."

The man started, gave him a quick shrewd glance.

"The dog ain't here. He's strayed off."

The boy shook himself impatiently.

"Will you take my check for a hundred now? I want Nigel."

Again Syder measured him—uneasily. He had not missed the glitter in the boy's eyes. How much did this fool know? But he felt reassured as Ross went on anxiously.

"You'll take it, won't you?"

"Well," Syder paused judiciously, "I kept the dog a month—that's twenty dollars board. But, like I said, he's strayed off. Some tourist might 'a' picked him up. That board bill, though—I ought to—"

"Listen," Ross interrupted. His voice was hoarse.

"Take my word, Syder, I'll make it up to you for keeping him—some other way."

Again the trainer shot a quick glance of suspicion at the other, but Ross was shivering as if afraid. It all puzzled Syder. He decided to agree.

"I'll make a bill, saying *if* that check's good and if you can find him, the dog's yours. How's that?"

Ross nodded and Syder beckoned him inside to write the contract. He noted curiously how the boy's hands shook when he made out the check. He took it from him hurriedly. There was something off color about this deal. But the young fool didn't know what *he* did, Syder felt sure of that. He opened the door, folding the check, thrust it in the corduroys.

"Where do you reckon your dog's strayed?" he asked. He wished he could smile.

To his surprise, the youngster seized his wrist and jerked him outside.

"Nigel's home," Ross said, speaking through clenched teeth. "He'll die, we think. . . . Now, I'll make it up to you for keeping him."

He leaned forward. His fist swung up from below his waist, cracked on Syder's jaw. The trainer's head went back against the wooden siding with a thud that made his skull ring. He struck out blindly with both fists, but a smashing blow landed on his nose. Blood spurted. He cursed, and the dogs in the kennels, hearing his voice fearfully stopped baying. But Ross Vincent did not stop. He moved in and sent a rain of short jabs across the trainer's cheek bones, one opening a two-inch gash below Syder's right eye. The trainer ducked and an uppercut that seemed to blow his face apart straight

ened him up again. Again a straight right cracked his head against the siding. He felt his knees buckle.

"You're killing me!" he cried. Just then a final vicious swing stretched him limp before Ross on the moonlit turf.

The boy bent over him.

"You hit me without warnin'," Syder moaned. "You didn't give me no chance."

"I gave you more chance than you gave Nigel. You shot a defenseless dog."

"He wouldn't bring the birds in. . . . Had to teach him to retrieve. Meant to give him a light charge—always do. . . . The wrong shell," the man moaned. Looking up into those glittering eyes, he was afraid for his life.

Suddenly Ross turned and left him. After a time the dog handler rose, and dusting his clothes, limped shakily into the house.

Ross waited until sunrise in his father's study. When he left, Nigel was still breathing; slow, sighing breaths. At night Ross came again and found the dog asleep. But Doctor Vincent said *that* was good news, and gave Nigel a fighting chance. The third day, the setter drank some broth and tried to scratch the bandage from his eyes. Ross spoke to him; told him he must not touch the cloth, and Nigel answered with a faint thump of his tail.

After that, his strength came fast, and one day he tried to walk around the house but with his eyes bandaged soon realized it was no use, and lay down by the window. Ross was watching him. He had brought his hunting coat and gun back from the farm having no

heart to use them now. When Nigel lay down, he went out to the gallery and brought the coat and gun inside.

"We won't use these again, boy, I'm afraid," he said sadly. Nigel lifted one silky ear that was free of the bandage and thumped his tail cheerfully. He raised his muzzle—*sniffed!* Then, springing to his feet, ran direct to where Ross stood and leaped up joyfully.

Ross started, dropped the coat. Nigel sunk his nose deep into its folds, jumped back, barking with excitement. At that, Ross called, and what was in his voice brought Doctor Vincent hurrying from the office. He too, stared at Nigel, as the dog sniffed the coat and barked again. It was not the setter's way to bark.

The two men gazed at each other, dumb with unbelief, until at last the old doctor said:

"It seems incredible—but—but his eyes are bandaged—I believe he *smells* the bird scent in that coat." He lit a match, stopped down and blew the smoke toward Nigel. The setter flinched and wrinkled his black nose disgustedly. Doctor Vincent slowly nodded.

"Yes, he smelled it. That charge of shot that tore into his muzzle must in some way have disturbed the sleeping nerves that govern scent—and in the upheaval, Ross, the dog has *found* his nose—his scent has come back."

Well, it was true. A month later Ross led him out into the fields again. Nigel's left eye was blinded by the shot but he carried his head high and turned it sidewise like a bird's, so that it seemed he missed it little. His old lightning speed was still the same, and when Ross freed the leash, he bounded out across the corn rows, slipped

to his distance-eating stride, and began a wide cast. The boy watching him, saw him check suddenly and strike the ground in a stiff, twisting point. A few yards to his left was a clump of goldenrod and burdock, by a snake fence. Quail cover. Ross hurried up, passed him, and Nigel held. Then at the boy's feet, a dozen feathered bombs burst out and darted drumming for the trees beyond the fence. A covey, the first that Nigel in his four hunting years had found except by crashing into them, scentblind. Ross did not lift his gun to shoot. Instead he laid it in the stubble and turning, knelt beside the dog and threw his arms about the silky chest.

"Boy, you'll never start a quail again!"

But Nigel's tense body only quivered. With vigil unrelaxed his gaze was following the scattered birds, marking them, so he might stand the singles with precision, as a setter should.

There were rumors in Pineknot as to the source of Matt Syder's badly battered countenance, but he said nothing. Ross kept silence too. He was in fact seen little in the town those late fall days; instead, each afternoon, he followed Nigel on the tough, speedy little horse over miles of the cut-over pine, exultingly watching the dog grow keener, faster, almost uncannily sure.

Nor was Matt Syder often in Pineknot. He too, was obsessed with a dog on whom he pinned great hope. Hope of winning the Mid-Southern Field Trial stakes, the big meet held at Sulphur Springs in the late winter. Such a win would mean money and prestige for Syder. The dog, Commander Chief, was a huge pointer, yel

low-eyed, liver and white, with wrinkled nose and needle-pointed tail. A dog that smashed his way in any going, big-boned, hard as flint.

But as luck would have it, Syder and Ross Vincent met face to face in town one day. Nigel was at Ross' heels and Syder held the pointer dog on leash. Ross would have passed on without speaking, but the dog handler stopped him.

"I ain't forgot what you did. I'm too busy now to take time to even things. I'll see you after I get back from Sulphur Springs."

Ross nodded coolly.

"All right. Any time." He looked down at the pointer. There were blue lumps under the fine hair above Chief's collar. "You've been training with a shotgun again, haven't you?"

Syder snarled.

"This dog's got heart—he takes what I give him—and it learns him. He'll be a winner at the Southern. A bird dog, too. *He* retrieves." But the big pointer cowered, shivering at the voice, while Nigel's back roached and his lips wrinkled upward showing his white fangs.

Ross' gaze went from the dogs to the trainer. There was contempt in his voice as he said:

"I wouldn't take your black heart to own a ten-time winner."

Syder's face twisted. Then he laughed. Filled with malice, that laugh.

"No, you already *got* a winner. I took care of that. Blind too, now, ain't he? And can't smell Limburger nor bring in a dead bird. Why don't you try him in the Southern?"

The boy impulsively stepped forward, and Syder's hand reached underneath his coat.

"Come on," he taunted. "I'm waiting for you—and our winner!"

Nigel growled a warning, deep down in his throat, and slipped around his master, facing the dog handler. The action brought Ross to himself.

"Heel, Nigel!" he said, and the setter moved back with reluctance. Then Ross stared at Syder, halted at the dawning of a thought the other's taunts had sprung—a thought that first seemed wild; and then most logical and sane. And when at length he spoke, the anger was drained from his voice. "I owe you something for what you said just now. I'll remember when we have a settlement."

With this he turned and walked away. Syder's bewildered gaze followed him. But he would have laughed long had he guessed the result of his meeting with Ross Vincent. For that night, the boy wrote a letter to the secretary of the Mid-Southern Field Trial Club, entering in the all-age stake his half-blind setter dog who, Syder claimed, could not smell Limburger.

There were nineteen starters in the all-age stake that year. Fast going dogs; class of the South from Texas to the Carolinas. Ross Vincent and his father arrived in Sulphur Springs late on the night of the drawing, by which the dogs were paired—two of each match. And as they entered the old Central House, a man standing at a table announced that Black Diamond's Nigel, Ross Vincent, owner and handler, had drawn a "bye" and would not run until the second series. Nine braces

paired, and his dog was the odd. The crowd around was talking loudly; good-natured chaffing, most of it. Someone touched Ross on the shoulder. It was Matt Syder.

"You took my advice, didn't you?"

Ross looked straight into the other's malevolent eyes. Then he turned away without answering.

The course at Sulphur Springs was made by nature for wide-going dogs. Broad cornfields and pasture, stretching out with gentle slope down to low swamp land where game birds find harbor beneath gum and cypress in the matted berry thickets. A dog might cover a good mile across the course and cast ahead an equal distance, and yet stay within sight of his handler and the judges.

The first morning Ross and his father joined the gallery of horsemen and followed the first brace—a trim setter, Wildfire Sal, and a lean lemon and white pointer, Max the Sly. The two raced from the leash across the open and Sal, almost at the edge of the field, made a steady point which Max backed gallantly. Sal's handler shot; the dog held firm until he sent her on. But Max, having greater speed, passed her. Alas, he blundered on a bird among the corn rows, which he chased, and thus gave himself a first black mark. At the end of the half hour, when the two dogs were ordered up, the match was Wildfire Sal's.

That was the first brace. A second pair of dogs was ordered on, and so it went until the shadows grew long across the meadows. Just before sundown Matt Syder brought out Commander Chief, paired with the great Sir Galahad, a Kentucky pointer who, the knowing one

said, would take the All-Age without trying. The knowing ones were wrong. Commander Chief ran his brace-nate off his feet, beating him to point after point, cutting in, down wind, to head him off on every find. It was Commander's day.

That night the hotel lobby rang with his name, and Matt Syder's face wore a smug grin of triumph. He laughed outright when the drawings for the next day's series paired his dog with—Black Diamond's Nigel. But when Ross heard the announcer call the drawing, his face became grim. He left his father and slipped out to the kennels back of the hotel.

Nigel was lying quietly on the straw, but his one bright eye was open and he stood up alert when his master entered.

"Old fellow, it's Matt Syder that you've got to beat to-morrow. Matt Syder, boy, who gave you this—and this—and this." His fingers touched the scars on Nigel's breast and head and rested just above the sightless, clouded eye. The dog thrust his muzzle heavily against the hand and blinked.

"Beat him, Nigel," Ross whispered. "He mustn't win. Remember what he did to you. An eye for an eye, Nigel."

The setter started. Perhaps he understood and was dismayed by the words—so much at variance with a rivalric setter's code. He touched the boy's wrist gently with his wet black nose; his one bright eye looked up, and to Ross it said plainly: "Champions don't carry grudges, Master."

The morning dawned with a gray haze. It was nearly one when the judges took the field. Ross Vincent, hold-

ing Nigel on leash, looked across at Syder's dog with cool appraisal.

Syder seemed strangely nervous. He felt sure his dog would win, hands down, against the crippled setter, but last night in the flush of victory he had bet big sums—sums so big he must not lose! The pointer impatiently jerked at the leash and Syder struck him with a loaded dog whip, hard, across the nose. The big dog whimpered. Syder glanced furtively at Ross Vincent. The boy had seen and in his face was frank contempt. Under his breath, Syder cursed. But the judge behind called:

"Ready, gentlemen!" and the gallery of mounted sportsmen suddenly grew quiet.

Commander quivered nervously as Syder fumbled with the collar snap. Ross, crouching beside his dog, felt Nigel's rippling shoulder muscles bulge under the silken coat, but the setter held rock steady.

Then Syder slipped the big pointer free.

"Get away!" he shouted and Commander gathered his sinewy legs and leaped into his stride. Down the field he hammered, across a ditch and on up a clover slope. A quarter mile; he turned his head. What was this shade of black and white behind him? Drawing up, too. The pointer stretched his stride, thundered past the slope. From the corner of his eye, he watched that oncoming shade of black and white. It crept up to his shoulder. Clung. Drew level. Passed him. The pointer had a vision of a queerly twisted head, a brushy tail—all melting into a dust cloud just ahead.

Then suddenly, the hurtling shadow checked; struck heavily, and froze to marble, nose and tail in line.

Commander thundered bravely up and backed th

point. Behind him, hoofs clattered. He heard Matt Syder curse and shivered again. Then a man strode by him, passing the black and white shadow too, striding on into a quail covey that burst drumming from the grass roots. A gun roared, and Commander hurled himself on toward the horizon, fighting to cut down the lead of that elusive shadow flitting on before.

A moment later, far back in the crowd, old Doctor Vincent saw the rider by his side rise quickly in his stirrups.

"That setter's on his second point, by Godfrey! The second, understand! Less'n a minute since they got away. He ain't a dog—he's a confounded air-o-plane—a cyclone!"

And the pointer pounding on behind that black and white shadow that skimmed the earth—perhaps he thought so too. But the big dog had a fighting heart. Sweat was streaming down his flanks. He breathed hoarsely, but not an ounce of effort slacked. He was giving all he had. All—but it was not enough. Point after point he lost—some by inches; more by gaps of a scant yard. Close—every one. But time and again the black and white shade, running head high, whirled in his tracks to a scent that Commander had to halt to find. Heart-breaking, but the big dog carried on, pursued at each lost point by dire curses from his frantic handler.

At last the judges rode to Syder, and old Lindley Baylor asked sternly that he choose his language with more care.

"Your dog is doing all a champion could do. But this

setter—he's—well, there's never been another like him."

"He's doped!" shrieked Syder. "Full of strychnine! He's a one-eyed, dull-nosed, dull-brained cur. I know—I run him out my kennels. Try him on retrieving—he won't pick up a bird!"

"We don't ask retrieving in a field trial," said Judge Baylor dryly, and spurred on after the black and white shadow skimming the horizon and the brown dog that pounded close behind.

There have been wonder field dogs in the years gone by. Each season brings its quota of great-hearted youngsters with the blood of champions hot in their veins. But old-timers still remember the Mid-Southern All-Age, when Black Diamond's Nigel beat Matt Syder's great Commander Chief. That struggle touched the peak among field trials. Six bebies the two dogs found in a single half hour, and five of these were Nigel's. Never a bird flushed as the dogs whirled to point in blurring speed. Nor did they break to shot as the guns roared and the brown feathered bombs burst from cover just ahead.

And Commander Chief, beaten, carried on stout-hearted, game to the last. In his stubborn soul there was no thought of quitting. Gasping in great draughts of air, battling the fatigue that dimmed his yellow eyes, he raced on after a fleeting shade of black and white that drove before him like the wind, now close, now whirling to a point where the big pointer found no scent.

At last old Lindley Baylor, turning to the second field judge galloping beside him, said hoarsely:

"Not in my day have there been two like them. Time's

up. Reckon there's no question—it's the setter's match."

The other nodded and spurred his horse to catch Matt Syder. The dogs were racing far ahead close on the edge of the rail fence that made the boundary of the gum and cypress swamp.

"Call him in, Syder!" the judge shouted.

Syder turned, white with rage. His lips twisted, but no sound came from them. He glanced at the speeding outlines of the two dogs. Just then the black and white shade soared above the boundary fence and Commander Chief, rising to a heavy tired leap, followed. They disappeared among the brush and tangled creepers of the swamp. Syder's teeth gritted. He swung the shotgun across-saddle.

"I'll call him in—the yellow-hearted quitter!" his horse leaped at the deep rake of spur and started on a lead run for the boundary fence.

Horsemen crowded round Ross Vincent as he raised his whistle to his lips to recall Nigel. A confused bedlam of admiring voices—"All-time champion! What's that setter's blood lines? He's all speed and nose—"

Ross blew the whistle shrilly for the second time, moving his horse out through the crowd. He had seen Matt Syder dismount and climb that fence into the swamp. Judge Baylor touched his shoulder.

"It's your match, Mr. Vincent," he said, but Ross, sitting tense, made no answer.

Suddenly, far distant, a gunshot sounded and a faint help of pain. Ross spurred toward the rail fence. Half-way across the field he galloped; there reined back as something worked out from beneath the rails. A bloody, broken-hearted dog—Commander Chief. His smooth

brown-spotted coat was stained red; one ear was shot-torn. He crawled humbly toward the rider, belly to the ground; cringing, fearful. . . . Thus had he been rewarded for his gallant losing fight.

Ross sprang down and knelt to lift him, but the dog moaned piteously at his gentle touch. Riders galloped up; they too, dismounted.

"Look, there's mud driven under the dog's coat!"

But Ross paid no heed. He rose and stared with quick awakened dread across the meadow into the shadows of the swamp. Nigel—where was he?

As if in answer, the sun glinted on a flashing shadow as it cleared the fence, and Nigel trotted toward him up the slope. The silky coat was mud-splashed and burr-matted, but the dog ran with his head high. Then Ross started, for in the setter's mouth was something that trailed out—something brown that whipped the ground as Nigel ran.

The dog came close, halted by his master and dropped on the dead grass tufts—a loaded dog whip. Ross stooped and picked it up. The braided leather handle was slippery with bright blood.

Ross turned to the men about him.

"Syder's whip," he said and added wonderingly, "I've never taught this setter to retrieve."

Nigel gave a sharp commanding bark and started on a back trail toward the fence. Someone took the whip. Absently Ross heard his words:

"Queer—the pointer hasn't lost all *this* blood. The handle's soaking wet."

Then across his mind there flashed the scene at Syder's camp that night; the trainer lying on the ground whimp-

ering the words in terror—"Had to teach him to retrieve. . . ." Nigel at the rail fence barked again—and Ross knew.

"Syder's hurt," he said. "This dog's retrieved his whip."

There was a quick silence for a moment. Then Ross started for the swamp. The setter crawled beneath the fence and ran ahead, followed by a solemn group of men who climbed the rails and trailed him down the brush-clogged path that led into the twilight of the deeper swamp.

In the soft earth Syder's footprints were clear; and those of the dog, Commander, whom he had followed in his vengeful hate. Farther on, in a quick hollow where a knotty cable of wild grape vine crossed the trail, the ground showed that the man had tripped and fallen to his knees. The print of gun barrels was distinct in the black mold. Ross hurried faster; on through the dim shadows; and at last found Syder.

He was lying quietly across a muddy pool on sharp cypress knees that thrust up through the stagnant water. His face was ripped open by fragments of gun barrel that had exploded when he fired, and blood smeared the canvas coat he wore. In the shallow water lay the double gun, one barrel shattered. There was a new shell in the chamber of the other barrel, which was intact but sealed with mud—both had been plugged with ooze when he had tripped and fallen at the wild grape vine as he emptied the first barrel at his dog.

They carried Syder from the swamp and laid him down beside the fence. As Doctor Vincent bandaged his torn face, he stirred and his lips moved.

"Am I a goner, Doc?" he asked. There was a change in Syder's voice, a lessening of the cruel, harsh timber.

The doctor shook his head gravely.

"Looks like your right eye's done for, Matt."

The man clenched his hands against the pain. After a while he spoke again.

"That setter—he brought you my dog whip?"

The old doctor nodded.

"We'd never have found you otherwise, Matt."

The trainer's head moved feebly.

"Retrieve—I learned him that—treated him bad to do it. But I must 'a' learned him. Well, he paid me back. Good dogs, setters, after all."

But Ross Vincent, standing there, felt his face flame—thinking of his words that night before the match was run. "An eye for an eye—" he had told Nigel, and now it had come about. He wished he could unsay the words. Then he felt a cold wet nose gently touch his wrist.

Glancing down, he saw the setter's one bright eye looking up at him. And it was telling Ross, he knew, a tenet of the setter's code—"Champions don't carry grudges, Master."

THE SHERITON PAINT-UP

BY GEORGE F. PIERROT

ALL Sheriton was in mourning, for the Sheriton freshman baseball team, on the Sheriton home grounds, had just finished walloping the Ashford frosh, 7 to 1.

You see, the annual baseball game between the Ashford and Sheriton freshmen always took place the day before the two varsities tangled, and for the last twelve years, every time the Sheriton freshmen had won the Sheriton varsity had lost, and vice versa. "Win the freshman—lose the varsity." That was the jinx slogan that never seemed to fail.

I was catcher on the freshman team, that year, and under the steaming showers I talked it over with "Rusty" Nayle, the tallest man in the freshman class. He was sandy-haired, with hazel eyes—the rangy kind of chap who's usually pretty much of an athlete. And a whale of a pitcher, too. Ask Ashford about that.

"I won't say I wanted us to lose," confided Rusty, wiggling his shoulders as he soaped them. "But just the same, every time I heaved the ball I three-quarters hoped those Ashford dumb bells would line it out."

"So did I," I admitted. "You were shooting 'em in so fast that you wore my mitt hand all out of shape."

"Even without any jinx working for Ashford, the varsity's chances were slim enough," Rusty went on.

"Now that we've won our game, they're tinier than a freckle on an ant's eyebrow."

It was the truth. We were feeling pretty low as we elbowed our way through the group of students that always seems to clutter up the door of a dressing room after a game. They were talking in hushed tones, as if they were in a morgue, and the tragic look on their faces showed that they, like Rusty and me, considered tomorrow's varsity game as good as lost already. For Sheriton this year had at best a fair to middling bunch—hard fighters and steady performers, but as far from real baseball genius as Pike's Peak from the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. We'd been beaten twice—by teams that couldn't, at least on paper, hold a candle to Ashford. Ashford had what the Ashford *Collegian* modestly dubbed "the greatest college ball team in a generation."

To make matters worse, to-morrow was Homecoming Day. Sheriton alumni by the hundreds were flocking back to the campus. Incoming trains were jammed with them. They wanted to stroll once more the old familiar paths, sing the old familiar songs, and most of all to cheer their team to victory over its ancient and bitter rival. And then to have the varsity trounced, and on the home field. It was a double-dyed shame.

But we didn't see any help for it as we swung down the street. We were bound for the Lion's Den, Sheriton's most popular eating house, where we were to meet Red Barrett. Red got his nickname from his hair, or maybe from his freckles. He had lots of both. Most of the time he wore a wide grin. Not an empty-headed grin, but the friendly, wideawake, let's keep-moving

ind. Red was the student manager of the freshman baseball team; he saw to our equipment, herded us on out-of-town trips, and took care of us in general. We needed to see Red because the whole freshman squad had an all-night job ahead of it. I'm coming to that.

The Lion's Den has tables in the middle of it, and booths around the side. There's always a scramble for the booths, because they're more private. The minute we entered we spied Red, and he was in trouble. He was trying to save a booth for us, evidently, and five fellows were trying to get it away from him. They didn't pay any attention to the "reserved" sign on the booth table, nor did they seem to want any one of a dozen unoccupied tables in the center of the dining room. A great big tall chap, lanky and stoop-shouldered, was the ring-leader. He wore a green and white Ashford arm band. Right away the battle light came into Rusty's face. More than anybody I ever saw, he enjoyed a good tussle.

"Here's five more scalps for the family mantelpiece," he remarked cheerfully.

"Right you are," I assented, "but at least three of 'em are going to be mine." And we started for the booth.

The tall bird was distinctly disagreeable, I noticed as we made our way among the tables. One of his two middle front teeth was gone, and moreover he had a way of smiling, nasty-like, down in one corner of his face.

"You're going out of here on your head in a minute," we heard him tell Red.

"I'd much rather go out on yours," Red came back. "Better keep it out of reach."

And then we arrived on the scene.

"We're the reception committee," Rusty told the lanky one. "But we don't recept worth a whoop until after we've had dinner. So you and your little friends run along and play until we're through."

The lanky one was taken aback. He was a regular devil when Red was alone, but not so brave when the odds were a bit evener. He colored up, and sort of stut-tered and swallowed.

"I—I—we'll get you later," he threatened, backing away.

"Them's noble words, Gregory," said Red. "But if you want to make 'em good you'd better bring the rest of the kindergarten with you, to help."

I could see by the glow in Red's cheeks, once we'd settled ourselves, that he was suffering from an idea I'd hate to live inside Red's head. Too much going on. Right after we'd ordered the fifty-cent "college special" dinner he began:

"The varsity is going to win to-morrow."

"Yes," growled Rusty, "the same way Siam is going to win the Olympic Games."

But I looked hopefully at Red. Maybe he had something up his sleeve. But he hadn't—just another idea.

"It's this way," Red reasoned. "Baseball is a whole lot more than just swinging a bat or stealing a base. The biggest thing in it is psychology. If you think you're going to win, why, victory's two-thirds yours. And if you think you're going to lose you probably will."

"If that's true," I broke in, "there's no use waiting until to-morrow. Might just as well hang up the crap to-day."

"That's because the psychology favors Ashford," Red argued, earnestly. "And the dickens of it is, our students are to blame for it. They go drooping around like they couldn't pay the landlord, or something.

"Now, Ashford's got a humdinger of a ball club, no one denying that. But they're temperamental—they're fair-weather birds. They play well when they're a couple of runs ahead, and up till now they've always stayed ahead so nobody could see 'em in the dumps. But let our boys get 'em in a tight place, and let our crowd once get to rooting like they thought we'd win, and it'll be a different story. All we need to do is change the psychology; we must convince everybody that Sheriton is sure to win."

"Yes, and all you need to do to catch all the whales in the Pacific Ocean is bale out the water first," Rusty frowned. "Mr. President, I move that Red be awarded the steam-heated bicycle in recognition of his brilliant idea. Also that he be appointed chairman of the committee on psychology."

"Gentlemen, I accept," said Red, solemnly. And we pitched into our bean soup. After all, it wouldn't be the first game that the Sheriton varsity had lost, and there was another year coming.

An hour later we three were on our way to the east of town. Rusty and I carried bundles of flares—little cans of powder that, when you touched a match to them, would light up the whole county. Red packed another bundle—cans of purple paint, and brushes. And now I want to tell you about the freshman baseball squad's all-night job.

Nearly two miles east of the Sheriton campus is

Mount Tiny, a steep wooded hill that rises abruptly from the plain around it. On the west slope of it, the slope that faces the campus, the class of '99 had cleared a space nearly an acre in size, and built on it, of solid concrete, a great block letter S. They painted it a deep purple, for Sheriton's colors—bless 'em—are purple and gold. Year after year the great letter, plainly visible from our stadium, was our inspiration through many a hard-fought game, and year after year the loyal sons of Sheriton would climb Mount Tiny, grub out any weeds or shrubbery that threatened to hide the S, and now and then give it a new coat of paint.

Then came 1906, and the happening that Sheriton students first thought a dastardly crime, and later accepted as a good joke. On the night before the Sheriton-Ashford baseball game at Sheriton, a flock of Ashford rooters sneaked up the mountain and painted the S a gorgeous Ashford green. Moreover, when our fellows frantically scoured the town, the next morning, to get purple paint, they found that Ashford had made the rounds of the hardware stores and bought out the entire available supply. So the S was green all through the game, and didn't Ashford throw it up to us!

From that day to this it has been a tradition that the night before the Sheriton-Ashford baseball game on the Sheriton grounds is "Paint-Up" Night. Sheriton during the ten night hours from eight to six, not only guards the big letter against all comers, but gives it a new coat of purple which is supposed to bring the varsity good luck during the game. And, since the Paint-Up takes place right after the freshman squad breaks training, to them is assigned the proud job of guarding the S

So that was why Red and Rusty and I were bound for Mount Tiny, and that was why we carried the flares and the paint. Rusty, as captain of the frosh team, was commander of the Paint-Up party. Besides the three of us there were thirteen more. And if we needed help, why, a signal would bring the whole campus to our rescue inside of ten minutes.

Well, at 7 o'clock there we all were at the S. We looked like delegates to a rag man's convention, for every one of us wore his oldest clothes. If there was to be a fight, we wanted to be dressed for it. The sun was just setting, and the ivy-covered buildings of old Sheriton were bathed in glory, as the senior class poets always say. They were mighty beautiful—the buildings, not the poets—so beautiful they brought a lump to our throats, and any one of us would have died, willingly, before he'd let an Ashford man touch the beloved S.

"Let's get going," Red directed, briskly. "Every fellow take one of those flares, and a handful of matches. We four"—he indicated Rusty and me and Gugan, our second baseman—"are going to stay right here and guard the S. That leaves twelve fellows, enough for four patrols of three each. Each patrol will guard one side of the clearing. Scatter out along the edge of it, so that you can see and hear everything and still keep out of sight. If you hear anything suspicious, find out what it is. If it's Ashford, and a mob of 'em, set off your flare. If you haven't time to do that, holler bloody murder and then hold 'em off long enough for us to light ours.

"But for the love of St. Christopher, don't light your flare unless you're dead sure there's deviltry afoot. Be-

cause down below the Sheriton fellows are watching, and any kind of a signal will bring two thousand of 'em on the run. And if we send up a false alarm, like they did two years ago, we'll never hear the last of it."

Then Rusty assigned the rest of the fellows to the different patrols, and announced who'd command each.

"A last word, fellows," he said. "If you nose into something suspicious, and aren't sure what it is, and you want help, why make a noise like a loon. Then the nearest patrols to you will come and help."

Ever hear a loon cry? It's the weirdest, eeriest call you can imagine, especially at night. Sort of a high pitched, piercing "woo-o-o." Our freshman team had spent spring vacation at Salisbury Lake, limbering up winter-stiffened muscles, and a pair of loons were there doing the same thing. Learning to imitate 'em was a popular indoor sport; we got so we could insult the loons in their own language. That was why Rusty made a loon call the password.

Well, the fellows scattered out, creeping through the bushes like so many Indians on the war path. And Red and Rusty and Gugan and I sat there on the crook of the S and waited. And I may as well admit that though we were close together and knew that a host of Sheritonites were within call, we felt mighty shivery. For Mount Tiny was a spooky place. The great S sprawled along the ground like a big snake. The wind rustled ghostly through the trees at the edge of the clearing. That was the only sound we could hear, except an occasional crash and groan as a switch engine on the rim of town poked its nose into a string of empties. Not a soul lived on Mount Tiny. In the old

says Tom Ryerson, a venturesome farmer, tried to use for pasture; the ruins of his big dairy barn are all that left to show for his bold attempt.

"We'll begin to paint, if nothing happens, about 10 o'clock," Rusty whispered to Red. His voice sounded drained and husky.

"Right you are," Red answered, in a tone just as unnatural. "I'll get out the paint right now." I heard him open his package, then exclaim in disgust: "Ding the back, anyhow! I forgot the brushes. I'll trot right back and get 'em."

"Don't do it," Rusty objected. "No use hiking three miles in the pitch dark. We'll find a way of getting the paint on, if we have to use your head for a brush."

"Try psychology on it," I suggested.

Thanks to Red's radium wrist watch, we knew when 10 o'clock passed, and 9:30. We hadn't heard a peep from our patrols, and we were pretty uneasy. What if the enemy had sneaked past them, were even now surrounding us? Every time the wind stirred a bush we sat up apprehensively. When a blundering bug, no doubt taking home his week's pay to his wife and children, crashed to my cheek, I jumped a foot.

"Golly, but I feel calm and peaceful," remarked Red. "Just as calm and peaceful as a harpooned whale."

From a lower corner of the clearing, we heard a low *Woo-o-o*." "Hardy Brennan," Red whispered. We heard a subdued crackling, as if the patrols were working their way to Brennan's assistance. Then another *Woo-o-o*." Red pulled out his flare, and got a match ready. Five minutes of anxious waiting during which

Red insisted he heard a crash, and then, from the same spot, a third "*Woo-o-o.*"

"Shall I set off a flare?" asked Red. Rusty thought it over. "Let's make sure," he decided. "We'll all go down and investigate. No use going off half cocked. Travel single file, each fellow twenty feet behind the other, so that if something does go wrong one of the chaps behind can signal."

I went first, and I'm not ashamed to say that I was mighty nervous. I had a curious feeling that every bush and shrub was watching me—as though behind each lurked an enemy, waiting to seize me. My left knee made a punching bag out of my right one. Now and then I'd stop and strain my ears, but not a sound. Ahead was a gaunt whitish object, a dead tree that had lost its bark. "That's as far as I'll go," I told myself.

And a truer promise was never made, because the self-same instant that I arrived there two dark shapes hurtled at me. Before I could cry out one of them threw a blanket over my head and the other caught me around the knees and downed me like a lassoed cow. In a jiffy I was tied, gagged, carried behind the tree, and dumped in a little clearing. And no noise or disturbance about it either. Within a couple of minutes three more bundles arrived on the scene—Red, Guban and Rusty. . . . All about me I could make out prostrate shapes—evidently the rest of our unhappy baseball squad. And standing over them were a whole mob of what couldn't be anything but Ashfordites.

A tall fellow bent over us. "These are the last of them," he said. I started as I recognized his voice. He lit a match to look at our faces.

"Can that," cried a companion, hastily. "We're not taking any chances on lights." But the brief flicker was enough to do a lot of damage. For Red and Rusty and I simultaneously recognized the sneering face with one tooth missing, and the lanky chap recognized us.

"I told you I'd get you later," he gloated. "Easy marks, for sure. Innocent as babes. Shouting out your plans as if there wasn't a spy within a mile of you. Thought you fellows were the only ones who could imitate a loon, didn't you?" He dangled something in our faces.

"Look 'em over," he taunted. "They're brushes. The handles are painted green and white. Official Ashford brushes—the same ones our forefathers used in 1906. We've got some nice green paint, too—three buckets of it, and guaranteed not to wear off. Goes mighty well on a purple background. In the morning your precious alumni will see their darling S in a decent color." By way of rubbing it in, he held up the buckets. Red, who in some way had worked his gag off, groaned loudly.

"What's that?" demanded the Ashford chap.

"The Ashford yell," Red yawned. "Goes pretty well with the Ashford color." Lanky bent over Red menacingly, but Red didn't flinch.

"Leave 'em alone, Andy," remonstrated one of the Ashfordities—honest, it looked as though there were a million of 'em—"We've got work to do." They withdrew a little distance and conferred.

All at once something dug me in the ribs; it was Red. He had wiggled over to where I lay. "Turn over," he whispered. . . . it was no time to demand an explana-

tion. I flopped over, graceful as a walrus after his Sunday dinner, and my face landed slap bang in a flock of nettles. My hands were tied behind me, so you see I couldn't very well steer myself. Red backed into me, and hunched over so that the rope that tied his wrist touched my fingers. I took the hint, and worked as fast as I could. In a minute Red's hands were free to busy themselves with the ropes that bound his feet. Just as he kicked them loose an Ashford guard saw him and yelled. Red jumped up, stooped, grabbed the Ashford paint buckets and brushes, and dived into the bushes.

Well, you should have seen those Ashfordities. Wild? Say, cornered hornets weren't in it with them. They took after Red like so many bloodhounds.

After five minutes all was quiet. "Good old Red," I rejoiced. "Ashford can't do anything without their paint, and in half an hour Red'll have a rescue party on the job that'll run 'em clear to next week." It was a pleasant dream, all right, and it ended as abruptly as most dreams do. I heard a shouted, "Here he comes!" and a heavy crackling, as though a bear were plunging through the underbrush. Out of the woods, not three yards from the spot he'd started from, burst Red, panting like a locomotive, and still carrying those buckets and brushes. He stopped short, saw he was surrounded, hurled the paint one way and the brushes another, and then, after a brief but savage struggle, went down with about two tons of the Ashford student body milling around on top of him. In a minute he was securely tied, and in two more Ashford had found the three buckets, and all but one of the brushes. My last hope was shot higher than the Woolworth Building.

"Let's get busy before anything else happens," directed the lanky one. He too was breathing hard, and from the bottom of my heart I hoped he'd lost that other front tooth!

"Pieface here," he pointed at me, "and this animated mess of freckles," meaning Red, "will come along with our party. March the rest of 'em to Ryerson's. Keep 'em there all night, and as late in the morning as possible. Stay till you hear the rescue party coming. We don't want 'em spoiling our good work.

"Connelly and his gang will do the painting. Be sure, Connelly, not to light a match or anything else, once you get in the clearing. The mutton-heads down in the valley will be watching for just such a signal. Let's go."

Each Sheriton man was lifted to his feet, his leg ropes untied, and escorted into the woods in the direction of Ryerson's barn. Two husky Ashfordites, one on each side of him, pinioned his arms. . . . Oh, if only Red could have got away with that paint. It was the first time I'd ever known him to run in a circle. Then two chaps grabbed my arms and hauled me to my feet, and next thing I knew I was stumbling in another direction, with two far from gentle hands guiding me.

Golly, but that was a long walk. Sometime when you want to commit suicide, tie your hands behind you, and then try to walk through woods at night without a light. By and by, when it seemed as though we'd walked clear across North America and must pretty soon step into the Ocean, the Ashford bunch stopped, whispered together a bit, then divided into two parties. Red went with one of 'em, I with the other.

Pretty soon our group reached the outskirts of town, and began crossing the railroad tracks. I knew we were near the switchyards, about a mile from the campus. We stopped in front of a box car with its bottom covered with hay. Two Ashfordites boosted me in, followed, tied my feet again, curled me up by the door, and wished me pleasant dreams. There wasn't any hope of escape, nor any particular good in staying awake. Besides, I was mighty tired, and the hay mighty soft. So I fell asleep.

I woke up stiff and cold. The box car door was ajar, and looking out, I judged it must be at least 7 o'clock. Wisps of fog were floating in. Fog! That was the last straw. The game was scheduled for 11 o'clock, so as to leave plenty of time for the Homecoming exercises in the afternoon. I'd hoped that early in the morning, before the alums woke up, our fellows would see the S, rush up Mount Tiny and repaint it. But this fog—goodness knows how soon it would lift. Often it stayed until nearly noon. Which meant that, barring accidents, nobody would discover what was wrong until the game. Because the Ashford fellows at Ryerson's would no doubt take advantage of the fog to keep their prisoners that much longer. I groaned when I thought of how the sight of that green S would crush the spirits of our rooters. Talk about your psychology! Couldn't be much worse, could it?

About an hour later my guards awakened. One of 'em, grumbling about the chilly weather, produced a can of pork and beans and some cheese and crackers. They had the goodness to untie my hands, but they didn't offer me any of the grub. And the fog didn't lift. At 9 it was still as thick as peanut butter, and at 10. At

10:15 you could see that the sun was on the job, but still the fog hid everything. By this time both teams were on the field, practicing.

"Ten-forty-five," said one of the Ashford fellows. "Time to mosey on. We're going to let you go—the rest of your fellows are free by this time. You can't do any harm now, anyhow. Your hands are loose—get busy and untie your own legs. See you at the game. Ta-ta."

My fingers were pretty cold, and it must have been ten minutes before I got those knots loosened and started for the stadium. On the first cross street I threw a scared look at Mount Tiny. Fog, nothing but fog. I had a wild notion to buy paint and rush up there, but a second's reflection reminded me that the stores were closed, and that I couldn't do much in the brief time I had, anyhow. So I continued, on a dead run, to the baseball field. At least I could tell our rooters what to expect. I rushed right past the ticket takers, up the stairway into the stadium, and collapsed, all out of breath, in the nearest seat.

It was a gay sight, that Sheriton stadium. Behind first base were massed the Sheriton thousands, their purple and gold rooters caps gay against the brown of the benches. In the center of this gorgeous mass, their silver instruments glinting, our band was playing a Sheriton war song. In the boxes, laughing and chatting, were faculty deans, the president, and some of our more celebrated alumni. On the Ashford side was the other end of the argument. They'd sent at least two thousand rooters to the game. They'd draped great green and white banners around the ropes that set off their section, and their fife and drum corps were banging and

tooting defiance at Sheriton. I never saw such a cocky, self-confident gang in my life. Where Sheriton was calling on its team to "fight 'em," Ashford was shouting to its boys to "Run up a big score."

Ashford's team was on the field, and a smart outfit they were, too. The ball seemed fairly to spurt from their hands. They leaped high in air after liners, dived after hot ones that rocketed along the ground, darted far into the field to gather flies, toed the bag and scooped in the wide ones with one hand. They were marvels to watch.

Along the sidelines Sheriton was warming up deliberately. Four pitchers were limbering their arms, and Coach Myers was bunting easy grounders to the infielders.

All at once a skinny figure in white trousers and green and white jersey climbed out in front of the Ashford rooters. He was their yell leader, that was plain, but more than that he was—he was the lanky chap who'd led the big raid on the Sheriton S. Right then I reared up on my hind legs and started for the players' bench. I didn't know what I was going to do, beyond telling our fellows all about what had happened.

But I was too late. The umpire had donned his chest protector, and mask in hand, was announcing: "The batt're-e-s for to-day's game are—" and the rest of it. Of course, there was nothing I could do after that. No use bothering our team, or anybody else, at this late minute. The sun was shining brightly now, and glinting off the glassed south roof of Botany Hall. But a big chunk of fog still clung, as it always does till the last moment, to Mount Tiny. Oh, if Sheriton could only

get a big lead, some way or another; then what folks saw when the fog lifted wouldn't make any difference.

But Sheriton didn't. In the very first inning Ashford combined a lucky bunt, a walk, a puny poke over first that nobody could quite reach, and one honest-to-goodness single, for a flying start of two runs. And how the Ashford stands yelled. They have a song that starts like this: "A-S-H-F-O-R-D spells Vic-to-ry," and they sang it while their fife and drum corps crashed out the tune. They yelled and hollered and threw derisive remarks our way.

Well, true to form, our boys played a steady game. Not at all flashy, but they held their own. They even, in the fourth, stretched a double and a rather doubtful Texas Leaguer into a run. But Ashford, alas, was out in front, and playing like world's champions. If there's such a thing as psychology, I thought grimly, it's all against us. And if Red expects to change it, he's got to do it quick. . . . Meanwhile that chunk of fog still hid the Sheriton S.

Then, between innings, three Ashford yell leaders fastened themselves on the end of megaphones and began a long spiel. I felt my face grow red, because from the way every man jack of them turned and looked at Mount Tiny I could tell just exactly what that harangue was about. At the end of it Ashford simply went crazy. They stood up and howled and yelled and cheered. Ashford's players knew what was in the wind, too, because every man of them was a-grin as he took his place. And they retired the heavy end of our batting order in snappy one-two-three style. Their turn at bat.

Ashford's first man singled, and the second man fol-

lowed with a lusty poke to the right field fence. We have a fast man out there, and he took the ball on the rebound and held the runner at third. Then, as my heart sank, for there was no one down, I heard a mighty triumphant roar. And it wasn't, strange to say, from the Ashford side of the stadium. The fog had lifted. The sun shone brilliantly, proudly, upon the cleared oasis on the side of Mount Tiny. And there, resplendent and glistening in its new coat of paint, was a Sheriton S. And the color was a rich, glorious purple.

I guess I must have gone mad. I know that when I came to I was sitting on the lap of an indignant and sputtering fat man, and that my right foot was massaging the ear of a gentleman two rows ahead. And I know that what I was yelling about paint and brushes and night raids must have sounded like a lunatic's rav- ing. But anyhow, what matter? There was the Sheriton S, and it was purple!

Well, you never saw such a change come over a crowd as came over that Ashford bunch. Here they'd been told the S would show up green, and it hadn't at all. They just naturally wilted. The lanky yell leader—well, his shoulders got twenty degrees rounder and his chest sort of caved in against his backbone. The Ashford players felt the change too. With a man on first and another on third, and no outs, they died without a run. In the meantime Sheriton, realizing that something had gone wrong with Ashford, and mightily pleased with the painting job that they supposed we freshmen had done, came to life and were barking out our yells in the time-honored style.

In the seventh Ashford filled the bases. Their yell

ings perked up a bit and it looked as though their rooters had, too. Then, just as His Lankyship got out in front of everybody, calling for a yell, a stocky, familiar figure rushed across the field and handed him something. The figure was Red and the something was an empty paint bucket.

It was comical, the way that chap collapsed. Even the Ashford rooters laughed. Then they booed him, booed their own yell king. I guess he must have been unpopular anyhow, and everybody welcomed the chance to sit on him. He crawled over to the players' bench and sat down, and that's the last I ever saw of him.

The eighth inning saw the head of our batting order up, and therefore our last chance to get the two runs we needed to win. Parsfall, our center fielder, was first, and Ashford's shortstop caught his high fly. Benniford, our third baseman, usually a dependable hitter, struck out. Then, before another man could step into the batter's box, out rushed Red, and over to the players' bench.

In his hand was a brush, a brush with a handle painted green and white. I leaned forward, recalling the words of that lanky yell king the night before.

"That's the brush that Red threw away and they couldn't find," I exclaimed.

I saw the team start to grin as Red explained something to them; then, everyone of them burst out laughing. Marker was up next. Red took his bat away from him, and solemnly rubbed it all over with the brush.

Now, if you know baseball, you'll realize that Red pulled a pretty shrewd stunt. In the first place, he mystified that Ashford team and worried them more than

a little. Second, he relieved the tension our fellows were under by giving them a good laugh. Third—well, you know how superstitious baseball players are! You can imagine that, to them, rubbing a bat with a brush captured from an Ashford raiding party was as lucky as rabbit's feet and horseshoes and four-leaf clovers put together.

Anyhow, Marker tripled past the center fielder. And Burson, a fair to middling hitter, after taking plenty of time to have his bat brushed, singled Marker in. Ashford's shortstop was so slow handling the ball that Burson, after dancing back and forth on first, swiped second. Which of course made it easy for him to score on Amberson's single just inside the left field foul line. We went wild, simply wild. All I can remember is that every Sheriton player was on his feet, swinging his bat as he yelled at the Ashford pitcher. And Red, leaping up and down like an Indian medicine man, rushed here and there, rubbing everybody's bat with his magic, jin-destroying brush.

We drove Ashford's pitcher from the box, and the relief pitcher couldn't fox us, either. The game ended with a score 7 to 3, in our favor. It was the first time in twelve years that either school had won both freshman and varsity games. Ashford, as Red had said, was a good team out in front, but not so good when things started going against them.

There on the diamond, with every Sheritonian dancing a victory dance and the Ashford stands emptying in crushed silence, I met Rusty and both of us hunted Red. We soon found him. His face was flushed and triumphant.

"What do you fellows think of the committee on psychology?" he wanted to know.

"High, wide and handsome," we assured him. "Who sneaked back and painted the S purple? Did you? And how did you work it?"

"You remember I got away last night?" Red asked. "Well, what I did was hide Ashford's paint and get ours, and then let myself be captured. Naturally, they thought they'd caught me with the same paint I started out with, especially since I had the same brushes. So, they simply went ahead and did our work for us. Guess Tom Sawyer's got nothing on us, what? I think we owe 'em a vote of thanks."

"You're a high-powered marvel," I told him. "You fooled the raiding party and you won the baseball game. How in the world did you ever get away with that green and white brush? That's what beat Ashford—painting our team's bats with an Ashford trophy." Red winked.

"I didn't tell our fellows that was really an Ashford brush," he said. "I just showed it to them, and they jumped at conclusions. You see, we needed something to start us hitting, so I sneaked out after the sixth inning, found a likely looking brush, and painted it green and white."

And by the way of proving his assertion, he thrust out his hand. Sure enough, across his palm, where he had gripped the handle, were smudgy green and white stripes.

And since then nobody has ever kidded Red about psychology.

HOT DOGS!

BY MITCHELL V. CHARNLEY

EDDIE TRIMBLE started it all when he ordered new uniforms for the Milford basketball team, C. O. D., knowing that we didn't have a smashed dime in the treasury. Everybody hopped on him.

"You're the kind of guy that causes empires to fall," I told him.

That wasn't true. Eddie was president of the high school athletic association, and the reason he was president was that he always made things go when he started them. He just grinned.

"Well, you wouldn't want the Milford team to go into the county finals looking like strangers to each other," he said. "If we're going to win, we ought to look—"

"Looking like John D. doesn't make you a millionaire."

"That's right," Eddie allowed. "But I figured we had to have them, and when you have to have things you find ways of paying for them. All we need is about \$100—"

We had as much chance of paying \$100 out of the flat A. A. exchequer as Babe Ruth would have of qualifying as a featherweight. But Eddie wasn't down

hearted. His blue eyes just grinned, under his red thatch, and he pretty nearly made me optimistic—as he always did.

But when he told me the scheme he had, I was sure we were sunk.

“Old Chatterton never gave anybody anything,” I grumbled. “I’ll bet he even short-rations the dog biscuit for his hounds.”

Josiah Chatterton was Milford’s leading merchant prince, and if he had been as tight as tradition made him, you couldn’t have pried a nickel from his pocket with an adze and a crowbar. He wasn’t overly popular, because he had a twisted sense of humor—or anyway we all thought it was twisted after the time he sold the whole gang, one Hallowe’en, a lot of window ticktacks with hidden springs in them that went off after they’d been used so long and broke windows—nine of them—all to smithereens. Milford is so small that everybody knew we’d done it, so we had to pay for the glass. And Chatterton’s store got the repair job!

So Toppy Nelson and Pete Fargo and the rest of the team felt just as I did about Eddie’s plan. Eddie had to argue his freckled face as red as his hair to convince us.

“He’s made good money just because he’s a good business man,” Eddie said, getting his dander up a bit. “You fellows are all giving up without trying. I’ll bet that, once we show him it’s good business, he’ll come through—”

“Good business for who?” grunted Pete, captain and star center of the team: “Not for Josiah!”

“Whom, Peter,” reproved Eddie. “And it’s good

business for Mr. Chatterton because it's good business for Milford to have a decent-looking basketball team to go down to Indianapolis as county champions. Oh—don't you birds think you can win? Lost your nerve?"

He got his way. He and I—I'm Bill Smoker, guard on the team—were appointed a committee to see Mr. Chatterton, and the next afternoon we cornered him behind the hardware counter in his store and put it up to him.

Mr. Chatterton didn't seem such a bad guy. He was tall and thin, and his mouth sat in a straight little line as though somebody had drawn it with pencil and ruler. He wore glasses, most of the time pushed up on his forehead, which ended pretty near at the back of his neck. Eddie told him what we wanted, and he pulled his specs down over his gray eyes and looked right straight through us. And it sounded as though he might have heard what Eddie had said the night before.

"Don't seem to me that would be good business," he twanged at Eddie. "What'd I get out of it?"

Eddie answered right back.

"A lot of good will, Mr. Chatterton. And Milford would feel a lot prouder of a championship team if it had the right kind of outfit—it'd be good business for the town, too.

"Anyway," he said, "we've got the uniforms coming, and they've got to be paid for!"

Well, that seemed to tickle Mr. Chatterton. He made Eddie go all over it again, and he began to chuckle, and finally a lot of little wrinkles appeared around his eyes and the ends of his mouth turned up and he actually grinned. It was like a grin coming over the face

of a wooden Indian—didn't look natural—but there it was. Once he reached for his check book, and I had a cheer crowding the tip of my tongue. But before he got his J. Hancock down he pushed the book away.

"No," he gargled, "I ain't goin' to *give* you nothing—hat ain't reasonable. I'll give you a run for yer money. I need a beaver hound in my kennels tarnation bad, an' I hain't been able to get one. It's about the only kind of hound I lack, an' if you kids could git me a good live specimen—male an' of sound health—I'd be willin' to pay you right smart fer it. Say—"

"Say \$100?" Eddie cut in, all excited.

"Yup—one hundred si-moleons," chuckled Mr. Chatterton, laughing in his throat like a mowing machine in need of oil. "You jest go an' git me a husky beaver hound—I'll take an option on all you can furnish—"

I looked at Eddie, doubtful as thunder. Old Josiah had fox hounds and wolfhounds and dachshunds and bloodhounds and basset hounds and greyhounds and pointer hounds and deerhounds and every other kind of hound in his kennel—he was a regular hound nut. He entered his dogs in all the shows, and I guess that if he ever got reckless and spent an extra quarter it was for them. He would be willing to give something to get a dog he really wanted.

But I didn't know where we'd get such an animal as a beaver hound—the whole thing sounded fishy to me. So I was surprised to see Eddie's freckled old face grinning right back at Mr. Chatterton.

"We'll do it," he promised. "Just tell me exactly the points you want in the dog, and we'll get him."

"Wa-al, let me see," Josiah chuckled. "He's got to

have kinda long ears, like a cocker spaniel, an' a tail like a Dalmatian, an' I guess that's about all. Or—no, he ought to be real round in the legs, too, same as these here pointers. An' big—I got to have him big Mebbe—”

It was all Esperanto to me—all I knew about dogs was that my little fox terrier was mighty nice to have around. But Eddie beamed like a Buddha, and he told Mr. Chatterton again that we'd get him his hound. Before I could say a word, we were outside on Main Street, and not much later we were in the public library—what for I didn't know. But Eddie was busy as a cat with a saucer of milk, and I had read a magazine nearly through before he called me.

“I found it,” he informed me. “We now know where we stand.”

“I don't,” I shot back at him. “All I can see is we stand to lose. Where'll we get a—”

“Don't worry, William—your brain isn't sturdy,” he told me unkindly. “You beat it to the gym, and tell the team, and anybody else you see, to meet me at seven at my house. I'm going to lay our campaign.”

Well, to make it short, I told everybody what had happened and we all piled over to Eddie's. Pete Fargo thought it was all crazy, and he started to say so right off the bat.

“Who ever heard of a dog with ears like a spaniel and a tail like an—an Alsatian?” he argued. “That's a hot dog—”

“You're taking the wurst view of it,” grinned Toppy.

“A dog in the hand is worth two on the bun, Pete,”

Eddie contributed. "And it's up to us to get that dog and put it in Mr. Chatterton's hand. Now—"

He went on to tell the gang just exactly what Mr. Chatterton wanted. Then he told us what we had to do.

"To-morrow's Friday, and you'll have to practice after school," he ended up. "Next day is Saturday, and the championship game with Nappanee comes Tuesday. That means we've got to work fast.

"Now remember—I want everybody to meet at Chatterton's store at three Saturday afternoon, and everybody's got to have his dog with him."

Eddie's enthusiasm was catching. His eyes gleamed with the fun he was getting out of it, and we all had so much faith in him since he had put over the bond issue that built us a new gym that we were all more or less hepped up about it. He explained over and over that he felt sure we could find the exact kind of beaver hound Mr. Chatterton wanted.

"Big—he said specially that he wanted them big," Eddie always warned. "It's up to you to find the right kind."

"Up to *us*, you always say," Pete argued. "How about yourself?"

"I have something else to do," Eddie answered with an ear-to-ear grin. "A bit of business. I have to leave the other to you."

And he wouldn't say a word more. So the meeting broke up, and on Saturday everybody started out on the quest for dogs.

Well, I guess the less said about my career as a dog-catcher—though I could say plenty about it!—the better. I never knew how scarce dogs were! I went first to

Sally Hart's home to see if they still had the big old elephant of a dog that I'd seen around, and Sally came to the door herself when I rang. What's more, she started talking before I got my mouth open.

"I'm very sorry, Bill, but we haven't any dogs for sale to-day. We stopped keeping beaver hounds long—"

I guess I must have looked funny, because she broke out laughing, her brown eyes sparkling, and she asked me to come in. Then she told me.

"You're the fifth that's been here this morning, Bill Smoker, to ask if we had that dog any more—and four of you are out of luck! Sam Ellis got us out of bed to ask about him, and Father said that if Sam needed him bad enough to get up so early on a cold morning he ought to have him!"

I realized before very long that it *was* cold. I went to every place in town trying to find the right kind of animal—finally got to knocking on the door of every house in the block. The snow was a foot deep, and my teeth were chattering so that I could hardly ask the question sometimes. But a lot of times I didn't have to ask it—Sally's wasn't the only place where others had beat me!

"I h-hope," I shivered, "that those uniforms are f-fur-l-l-lined!"

I staggered home for lunch, and Dad haw-hawed when he saw me trying to squeeze a frosted hip in between coils of the radiator. I told him that I guessed he'd be cold too if he'd been out on a still-hunt all morning, and then he wanted to know what the trouble was. I explained, and he roared. But he gave me a hint

"Ever think of Sallaman's?" he asked.

It was a long cold walk to the big farm a couple of miles north of town, toward Goshen, but I made it as soon as lunch was over. And it was a good hunch. Old Mr. Sallaman had more dogs than he had acres, seemed to me, and he thought the whole affair was the best thing he'd heard since McKinley. When he got through laughing, though, he said he'd be glad to help me. He called, "Benny," and what I had taken to be a kind of fuzzy brown sofa over on the other side of the room uncurled, shook itself and started toward us.

Well, I never felt so small in my life. If Hannibal had had that kind of pup instead of elephants when he crossed the Alps, he could have taken Rome with his hands tied. If Napoleon had enlisted a couple of 'em on his side at Waterloo, the whole world might be speaking French to-day. Honest, that dog's head came up to my chest, and I'm no runt. "Benny" doesn't sound big, but boy!

"Does he—qualify, Bill?" Mr. Sallaman asked.

"Qualify! Say, he wins in a walk!"

He looked like exactly the dog Mr. Chatterton had described—long ears, husky legs and the size of a Shetland pony. And when Mr. Sallaman said I could keep him as long as I'd feed him, I thought I was in luck.

Benny, I'm glad to say, was a good-natured mutt. I jumped behind a chair once when he opened his mouth about two feet and yawned, but I soon discovered that his instincts were playful but peaceful. So I put a leash on him, and we went off down the road.

Lots of the time I wasn't sure whether I was leading Benny or Benny was leading me. He had an unerring eye for two-foot snowdrifts—didn't miss a one! But we

finally got to town. I made a lot of uncomplimentary remarks about Eddie Trimble and his ideas on the way, but Benny didn't pay any attention. He just rambled.

We were all to meet back of Chatterton's store at three. Say, when I was half a mile away I began to realize that I was going to the dogs. Benny realized it, too—he heard the barking and yowling and yipping as soon as I did. He grinned—if he didn't I'm an Eskimo—and started to lope.

"Whoa, Benny!" I said soothingly. But Benny didn't understand horse language. He didn't whoa. Instead he lengthened his stride. Pretty soon he was galloping. I didn't have any idea of galloping with him, but unfortunately—to play safe—I had knotted the leash to my wrist. And so when Benny hurried I hurried—for a solid half mile, with Benny roaring a friendly greeting all the way.

Well, if you weren't in the crowd that was watching there, you've never seen dogs. When we catapulted into the mob it looked as if all the dogs in the world were there in the back yard—and all of them ringing the welkin. There were black dogs and white dogs, brown dogs and red dogs, and two, three and four color combinations. Toppy Nelson had a blind dog and Slat Heggerty a dog with only three legs; every man of the gang—except Eddie Trimble—had a dog.

And what canines they were! If stretched end to end, they would have reached a certain distance beyond Sirius, the dog star. They were giants—the smallest would have made a hippo recoil in confusion. Where they had come from I didn't know.

Milford had turned out one hundred and two per

cent to see them. Everybody was there, Mr. Chatterton included, grinning and stamping and kidding. There was one stranger attracting a lot of attention, too, and I spied Eddie kind of trailing around after him—a tall, athletic young fellow who was giving the pups the once-over.

I could see that Josiah was trying to find out what this chap was about, but somehow Eddie and the chap managed to keep on the other side of the yard from him. Finally Josiah's long nose got cold, I guess, for he went into the store. I would have liked to go and ask Eddie about the chap myself, and find out how soon I could get rid of Benny; but Benny didn't see it that way—he was busy making friends, and I had to chaperon him.

So all I could make out was that this tall chap, whose name I heard somebody say was Starbuck, was mightily interested in big dogs. I just caught snatches here and there—"likes 'em husky . . . fifty dollars a pair . . . just came to town from the North . . ." And so on.

Well, about the time I had given up my left big toe for lost, this tall chap said a few words to Eddie, then turned and strode away. Eddie came over grinning to me.

"Come on. You're half the committee."

I got three strong men and a boy to hold Benny, and in we went to see Josiah. We found him sitting behind his desk in a corner of the store, chuckling away like a 1921 Model T.

"I see you got some dogs," he greeted us. I didn't exactly like the way he grinned, though.

"Yes, Mr. Chatterton," said Eddie. "Long-eared,

sturdy-legged dogs. And big—have you seen them, Mr. Chatterton?"

Eddie was as enthusiastic as a minister at a Sunday school picnic, and I stared at him. It seemed crazier and crazier to me. And Josiah's next words made me feel sick.

"Yump—all of 'em. They got all my p'int, too—an' a few extra. But I ain't seen a single beaver hound, boys—an' you know that's what I said I wanted."

Eddie still smiled, and his politeness was suspicious.

"Well, they have strains of beaver hound, Mr. Chatterton. And we got them specially for you—"

The old fossil cackled.

"Nope. They won't do. I said pure beaver hound, an' I can't use anything else."

"You don't want any of them? Not even—not even Benny?"

I blurted that out. It broke my heart to think that I had struggled with that miniature earthquake for nothing. But Eddie waved me aside.

"We're sorry, Mr. Chatterton," he said smoothly. Too smoothly. Too smoothly to be real. And it seemed fishier than ever to me. I remembered those fake tick-tacks, and it suddenly dawned on me that Josiah had been stringing us all along. I boiled—but Eddie smiled.

"We're sorry—but it's all for the best. Because we can interest Mr. Starbuck now—"

"Hunh?"

Old Chatterton jumped as if he had suddenly found a tack in his chair—I hoped he had. He jerked his glasses down and glared at Eddie.

"You'll interest who? That tall guy? What fur? Who—"

"Why, didn't you know?" Eddie smiled blandly. "Mr. Townsend Starbuck is in town, and he seems to want dogs—"

"What kind o' dogs?" The storekeeper was all business now. His lips were straight as a string, and his words fairly crackled.

"Big dogs, Mr. Chatterton. Aren't we in luck? He speaks of good big dogs for dog teams, and they're rumoring that the right kind is worth fifty dollars a pair. I'm mighty glad you don't want them, Mr. Chatterton. I kind of feel that, since you ordered a dog first, you ought to have your choice, but if you can't use these here—"

The old chap nearly stuttered, he was so excited. I stared, but light was reaching me.

"I ain't turned 'em down yet, definitely, an' I don't know but what I'll jest—wal, reconsider. Who is this yere Starbuck, now?"

Eddie explained. It seemed that Mr. Starbuck had come to town to see relatives, and it had gone around that he needed big, strong dogs. So Eddie had figured that if Mr. Chatterton didn't want them, we could still sell them.

But Mr. Chatterton apparently changed his mind.

"Reckon mebbe I'll exercise my option," he informed Eddie. "You got those dogs for me, didn't you? An' I'm goin' to buy 'em. I'll—I'll give you fifty dollars for the lot, by heck!"

I could see the game the old skinflint had in mind—he thought he'd buy the dogs, then sell them at the

profit we ought to make. I was wild. But I could see Eddie was weakening.

"They're yours to buy if you want them, Mr. Chatterton—we got them for you," he said slowly. "But fifty dollars won't pay for our suits—won't you make it a hundred?"

I knew there were close to twenty dogs out there, and lightning mathematics told me that this would mean \$500 at the Starbuck price. I wanted to slug Eddie. But he kept right on. In the end they compromised—\$75.

Well, old Josiah beamed a Chessy cat, and I just about wept. We were turning to go, when Eddie remembered something.

"By the way, Mr. Chatterton—you'll be sure to feed the dogs well, won't you? Mr. Starbuck says sledge dogs have to have meat, and plenty of it—must be good and strong. He'll want to see them looking fit, if he's to be interested."

Old Chatterton said he would, and I knew that was true. He fed his own dogs well, and it would be good business to feed these, too.

When we got outside again and Eddie had explained to the fellows about the deal, there was dangerous grumbling. It seemed that some of the boys had paid a couple of dollars or so for their pups, and some more had just borrowed them. We didn't even have \$75 clear profit—and how could we sell the dogs that didn't belong to us?

"Can't be bothered with details now," Eddie told them rapidly. "Just leave it to me—if there's any trouble, I'll undertake to handle it. Those dogs are Mr. Chatterton's. Now—I've got business on hand. Come on, Bill."

He led me, growling, to Sol Harkins' meat shop, and Mr. Harkins, round and smiling in his white apron, seemed to be waiting for him.

"It's all ready for you, Eddie," he said. "Two big baskets of it."

He pointed to two market baskets on the counter, piled high under their paper coverings. Eddie hefted one, and he had a tough time lifting it.

"I'll take them," he said, "and pay you Monday."

Then he turned to me.

"Grab one," he said, "and come along."

I grunted that I wasn't an errand boy, but Eddie just grinned.

"Grab one," he commanded, "and shut up!"

They were heavy as lead, those baskets. Fortunately it wasn't far to Eddie's house, or I'd have gone on strike—I had had about enough of what seemed to me a mighty silly affair. But Eddie was beaming—if he had been a red-headed cat he would have purred.

"Bill, my boy," he chuckled, "you're now in the butcher business."

He wouldn't tell me any more. So, after he had repeated his maddening "wait and see" a couple of times, I closed up.

We didn't wait long. It was only a few minutes after we got to Eddie's that there came a knock at the door, and Eddie snickered.

"I give you seventeen guesses who this is," he told me, "and they're all wrong!"

Well, he opened the door, and there stood the gaunt and obviously peeved figure of Josiah Chatterton, in person. He didn't wait for Eddie.

"What's all this?" he demanded angrily. "Why won't Sol Harkins sell me meat for these dogs?"

"I suppose, Mr. Chatterton," Eddie replied sweetly, "it's because he hasn't any to sell. You see, I'm manager of his dog meat department now. Would you care to buy from me?"

For a minute Josiah just stood there and gargled—I thought he was strangling. Then he got over it.

"You're a smart one, ain't you? I s'pose you think you c'n rob me an' get away with it. Well, you can't! What—what's your price for meat?"

I was beginning to enjoy it now, and so was Eddie. But he seemed all business.

"Twenty-four cents a pound, Mr. Chat—"

He didn't get any farther, because Josiah blew up right then and there. He raved and he ranted, and he called Eddie a pirate and a varmint. He'd bought dog meat at seven cents a pound for years, and he didn't cal'late on starting to pay such a price now. He'd go to Leesburg to buy—

"I don't believe you'd have much luck there, Mr. Chatterton," Eddie broke in smoothly. "I was there this morning, and I got all the butchers there had for sale. I'm their agent too."

The poor storekeeper was purple by this time, and I felt a bit sorry for him. But Eddie added the crowning blow.

"Same in Nappanee, and Syracuse, and the Junction, and New Paris," he said. "I saw them all—and the farmers aren't butchering over the week-end."

Well, that wasn't all that was said, by any means. But the outcome was that Mr. Chatterton bought sixty-one

pounds of meat at Eddie's price, piled it in his car and went storming away.

"I'll have more on Monday," Eddie called after the man.

We made just about \$10 on that deal Eddie figured. And I began to have more respect for him. But I had a thought.

"If Mr. Starbuck buys the dogs and takes them away, then the game will be over, won't it?"

"I thought of that," Eddie came back. "And the answer is that Mr. Starbuck left town to-day and won't be back until Tuesday."

To make the story short, the same thing happened Monday, and again Tuesday. Mr. Chatterton had to have the meat, and Eddie had a corner on it.

"Just good business," he told the storekeeper pleasantly. "I know you'll understand."

Josiah understood, ~~and~~ 'll right—but it didn't make him like it. He asked ~~an~~ ^{his} family when this Starbuck would be back, and when Eddie said he had promised to be on hand for the championship basketball game Tuesday night, Josiah grunted that he'd be there too, dogs and all!

By late Tuesday afternoon, then, Eddie discovered that he had just enough money—what with Mr. Chatterton's \$75 and the profits on the meat business—to get the team's uniforms out of the express office. And say, they looked swell! Bright green shirts with MILFORD across the front, padded khaki shorts, green and white sox. Knee pads and shoes, too—complete new outfits for the team and four subs. Eddie bought mighty well, and we were tickled to death.

The town was pretty excited by this time. It was the first year Milford had gone so far in the county tournament, and we figured that we had a decent chance of taking Nappanee over for a cleaning. That meant that we would go to the state tournament in Indianapolis, and boy! we sure wanted to do that.

So, except for Eddie and Mr. Chatterton and the fellows who had borrowed dogs, people had more or less forgotten the affair. But Eddie hadn't forgotten, and we fellows hadn't, and you can bet your Sunday suspenders that Josiah hadn't.

"Mr. Starbuck will be at the game," Eddie told him a dozen times, "and I advise you to have the dogs right there. Then you can deal with him."

That was the way it was left.

Boy, that was a basketball game!

Nappanee came over with a fighting, rangy set of players, fiends for the basket, and they wanted to go down to Indianapolis as much as we did. From the first whistle—the gym was packed to the rafters—they started as though the Old Nick was after them, and let me tell you it took the fastest defense we'd put on all winter to hold 'em. I'm backward for Milford, and I know.

Right after the first whistle Wysong, Nappanee forward, took the tip-off, and before we could get going he had passed to his buddy Wartzler, torn down the floor, taken a return pass right out of my hands and made a neat a hook-shot as you'd ask to see. Two points for the orange shirts! What's more, they did it again, identically the same way, a couple of minutes later. And we hadn't had a single shot, except for a foul that Pet-

Fargo dropped through. So it was four to one within three minutes—and then we tightened up.

We played the game in quarters, and that first period was about the slickest, hottest basketball I've ever indulged in. If the ball wasn't flashing around the floor under my basket, with me working like a man in a hornet's nest trying to be every place at once, it was doing the same thing down under the Nappanee hoop. Fast? Say, the passes and the pivots and the shots were so speedy that you had to guess about two plays ahead in order not to be three behind.

Anyway, we held even, and when the rest at quarter time came we were still those three points down—11 to 8. That wasn't so bad. As I flopped down on the floor I thought for the first time of Eddie and Mr. Chatterton and the dogs, and I looked around to see what I could see. The first thing was the shiny bald head of Josiah sitting right in the front row and polishing off his specs—and he was red in the face as if he'd been playing himself. Then I tried to find Eddie, but he wasn't in sight. That was funny, because Eddie's red hair stood out like a lighthouse, and anyway, as president of the Athletic Association, he usually sat down by the table where the scorers and timers were placed.

Time was called, and I forgot them again. The play slowed up a little that quarter—which was all that saved me—and the slick work contributed by Pete at center and Toppy Nelson, the fast little forward who had made more baskets than anybody else in Northern Indiana that season, helped us to put through three goals while Nappanee made only two and a foul. When

the gun went off, the score stood at 16 to 14—we were two points down.

“Anybody seen Eddie?” panted Pete as we crowded through the door to the dressing room. Apparently he had been thinking of the same thing I had, in the first intermission.

“He isn’t here,” I answered.

“No—but Josiah is, and he’s going to wonder about Starbuck and the dogs—”

We couldn’t discuss it further, though I guess it worried some of the fellows a bit. How did Eddie think he could get us out of the mix-up—at least those of us who hadn’t owned the pups we sold to Chatterton?

That was what was worrying me—the matter of Benny—when what did I hear but a thunderous bass yowl that could be nothing but Benny himself! It wasn’t alone—there was more yowling and barking with it—and in a moment a yell went up from the crowd just the other side of the door.

“The party’s on!” grinned Toppy.

Well, we made a dash for the door, and when we crowded through we found the whole menagerie of purps there—the floor was filled with them. And say, if they looked big outdoors, they looked like dinosaurs inside. If Mr. Starbuck wanted big dogs, he sure could get them here—

Just then, it seemed, Benny spotted us. He must have remembered what fun he’d had leading me around town a few days before, because he came whomping up with the grace of Jumbo doing a tango and proceeded to leap at me just to start a game. In an instant the whole lot

of them were in an uproar. Several of them were like Benny—they found somebody they knew—and they paid little social calls. Others started to play tag, and there were big dogs all over the place. One bloodhound got gay with a Newfoundland, and it looked as though we were going to have the battle of the century. But somebody pulled them apart, and we quieted the rest.

It was just then that Eddie appeared. He came through the crowd at the end of the floor, a kind of sparkle in his blue eyes. A tall athletic young man, with a pleasant grin, was behind him.

Eddie didn't keep us waiting. He marched right up to where Mr. Chatterton was sitting.

"Mr. Chatterton," he said, "this is Mr. Starbuck." The bronzed young man bowed and grinned, and Josiah came as near smiling as his worried red face would let him.

"How de do?" he grunted. "You—you the feller that was lookin' for dogs?"

"Well, yes," he answered. "I was—for a certain type of dog. Sled dogs, you know. And what I am interested in is—beaver hounds."

Right there I forgot my dignity. I smothered a whoop, and I could see Eddie struggling to keep a grin off his face. But it was a mystery to most of the people there, and they quieted down to watch. Even the dogs stopped hunting mice and sat down like sphinxes here and there.

"Beaver hounds," Josiah gasped. "Beav—there ain't no such animal!"

Mr. Starbuck looked shocked and surprised. "But

Edward here told me you ordered one," he replied. "A big, strong dog, with long ears and a tail like a Dalmatian. Just the thing for dog teams up North—"

Poor Mr. Chatterton was purple. This looked like a dose of his own medicine. At last he managed to speak.

"B-but *beaver hounds*! I kin let you have St. Bernards and bulls and police dogs and mebbe a Newfoundland—"

"Nothing but beaver hounds would do," said Mr. Starbuck sadly. "I'm very sorry."

"Ten dollars a pair," gasped Josiah. "Seven-fifty! Six—five 'n' a half—"

Mr. Starbuck could not be touched. I'll have to admit that it did me a lot of good, and the rest of the gang enjoyed it too. But even then it did not solve the problem as to how we were going to return the dogs we had borrowed. What about Benny?

Well, I had forgotten Eddie.

"When will you need some more meat, Mr. Chatterton?" he asked pleasantly. "Now that you are not selling the dogs—"

Josiah went white. He glared, and started a retort; but it never got out. For Eddie was grinning, and Mr. Starbuck was grinning, and right beside me sat Benny, grinning too as his tail thumped the floor. Slowly the storekeeper forgot his wrath, and in a minute the lines of his steel-edge mouth turned up at the corners and he grinned too.

"You boys win," he chuckled, like a real sport. "What's the tax?"

"I don't like the meat business much," returned Eddie. "I tell you—if you'll let me have the dogs we

sold you in compensation for giving it up, we'll call it square. How's that?"

Josiah let out a real laugh, then.

"They're yours—take 'em away!"

So everybody got his dog back. Even Benny went home, tied behind a truck! The outfits were ours, and everybody was satisfied.

The rest of the game? Why, that between-the-halves incident took a load off our minds, I guess. We started in double time, and inside of five minutes we were four points ahead of Nappanee. They never caught us, and the game ended 27-24.

Sure—we went to Indianapolis. Won a couple of games down there, too. But Winchester was too good—they put us out in the third round and went right on to the championship. It was earned.

It was on the way back from the tournament that Eddie finally told the whole story. Said that he suspected from the time Josiah made the first proposition that there wasn't any such purp as a beaver hound, and he verified it that evening at the library. Then he laid out his scheme—including his cousin from Goshen, Mr. Townsend Starbuck—but he didn't tell the rest of us because he was afraid we would not go through with it.

The biggest kick of the whole affair was what happened when we got back. We were met at the station with news that Josiah Chatterton—no less—was giving a welcoming party for the team, and what kind of party do you think it was?

A hot dog roast!

LITTLE DUFFY, THE GREAT

BY KENNETH PAYSON KEMPTON

EVER hear of a cox who couldn't swim? Nor me either—that is, not until I met up with this Duffy kid. It don't seem reasonable, any more than an oar that won't row, or a coach that can't talk. But it's God's truth: I seen the thing with these eyes that never set knee, thwart, or outrigger untrue in thirty-five years of honest work. It's God's certain truth. Once in a century they go ahead and produce a coxswain who can't swim. Not a stroke.

Fooled? He had them all fooled, me including. You see, there ain't no law in college, like they have in schools, requiring a man to navigate himself across the river before they'll leave him set foot in a shell. They just take the thing for granted, like, same as you or me would. And this Duffy, naturally he said nothing. And you can believe it or not, but there wasn't a soul knew the truth, until after it was all over, but him and one other. And that's me. And *I* didn't know until the very night before the race. . . . Fact.

He was only a freshman; that might account for it. Funniest little runt you ever laid eye on. Looked like a good breeze might pick him up and blow him over the boathouse—seems to me he weighed in around ninety-two or three, on Race Day. Hair the color of that strip of cedar. Hump-shouldered. No account eyes, hid up

behind them big tortoise-shelled specs the students used to wear. But that kid's voice!

They stuck him in the third boat. Wouldn't have done even that, I guess, if they'd had enough coxswains who knew their job to go around. *He* didn't know a tiller rope from his necktie—he'd come on East to college from some jerkwater creek in the South, all mud and catfish. And the freshman manager was looking for somebody to steer the third boat. There was young Strand, from Middlesex, for the first, of course; and a lad by the name of Carlson to sit in the second. But that's all. And on the first day of college that manager was tearing his hair. "Who can cox? Where's another cox?" he was yelling.

I seen the thing right through the open door of my shop here. This Duffy was wandering around by himself, poking the wherries and gaping at the sweep-rack, and the manager came rushing up to him.

"Can you cox?" says he.

"Sure, I guess so," says Duffy.

And the manager stuck a tiller in his hand and rushed him down on the float, all hands waiting to go. I heard somebody laugh, down there. I wanted to see the get-away—had a notion there'd be something comical about it. But Stebbins, the varsity captain, come into my place just then and wanted to know where the devil was this, that and the other thing, and by time I'd shut of him and run down to the float doorway, all three freshman boats and the coach's launch was below the bridge.

But I seen the return. It was that I had in mind to tell you.

Yow. . . !

Course, Duffy's boat had to wait for the first and second to dock. So she laid out there in midstream, the men hanging over their oars. Pretty soon the two shells was out of the way, and I seen Crabbe—he was coaching the freshmen, that year—talk to the third through his big red megaphone. 'Bout fifty yards off the float, they was, when they started.

Well, they come for it, head on. It was late afternoon of a still, sunny September day. You could hear the slides run back with a click, and the locks go *clump thump!* and the wet rush past the blades on the finish. Rowed pretty good, they did, for a green eight of kids just chucked together. In the launch I seen Crabbe lay down his megaphone, and turn to talk with the manager.

And they kep' coming, straight for this float. Ten, twenty, thirty yards and somebody shouted. Duffy didn't hear. I seen him in her stern, all scooped over his tiller lines. The sun fell full on his face. I seen that face get all screwed up with feeling. Scared out of his wits, thinks I. Poor snipe, thinks I.

They come on. Crabbe was still turned away. There was five thousand dollars worth of shell going smash in five seconds. Well, thinks I, 't ain't *my* lookout—

And all of a sudden, across that little bit of open water come this Duffy's voice. And by gorry, sir, it was great. Not a mite scared. The kid was *sore*. He was out to challenge the *world*.

"How d'you stop 'em?"

That was all he said. Crabbe turned like a flash. "Easy all! Hold hard-all!" shot out of the mouth by force of habit. But before that shell lost her headway, with her nose three feet from the float planking, it come to me

like a judgment: that Duffy kid—pink hair, specs, and all—he'd bear watching.

You ain't got a notion how right I was.

Didn't see a whole lot of him, through that fall and winter. But I heard him. Seemed to me he picked up the stuff pretty smart. Along about five o'clock, when the boats was due to come in, I'd commence listening—right here in my shop where I'd be doing some rigging job or other. And first I'd hear the chatter of the varsity coxes, and the grunt of their locks—Foster, the varsity coach, booming like a foghorn at them. And then the freshman first would come along. Strand in her stern—his mosquito-voice chanting away; and the second hard after them. Then all of a sudden it'd be: '*Now we'll have ten to put her home. . . . One . . . Two . . .*'

And I'd know Duffy was through the bridge.

There was something about that lad's voice you couldn't mistake. It's hard to explain. But look here, 'd you ever take a strip of fine Bessemer blue steel, bang it down on a big anvil, and then lay it quick to your ear? Just like that, it was. Duffy's young throat had the hum of blue steel in it. Whatever he said, "Eyes in the boat, Three-ee," "Slo-ow back, Seven, don't rush that slide," "*Now, let's go—Ketch-ch-ch. . . . a-WAY!*"—that blue steel hum was always there. 'T wan't nothing he'd learned: that voice was born in the kid. Maybe his dad was a ragman.

And they rowed for him—Lordy, how they rowed! Two weeks before Thanksgiving the third freshman picked the second by four lengths of open water. Crabbe hooked up the two boats—bounced four men off the

second and moved four up from the third. For a week they rowed, and raced again. Duffy's shell won just the same. That night I seen the captain of the second freshman whispering to Crabbe. Next afternoon *Duffy* moved into the other boat. Week later they raced again, this on the last day before hauling out for the winter. They raced over the varsity two-mile course. Cold as blue blazes. And the second just romped away with them. Yes, sir, that young snipe from nowhere had climbed a peg for fair. The whole boathouse was talking, Carlson, the second cox, was sore, but the thing was as straight as that brace. Duffy was the better man.

During that winter, while the boys were working on the machines, he hung around pretty regular. 'T ain't in the books, of course. A cox belongs in a shell. So long as the crews ain't in the water, why he's off duty, so to speak. But this Duffy, he hung around. Stuck to Crabbe like fish-glue—walked around just behind him, listening to what he'd say. Lord only knew what was going on behind them big specs: the kid never said a word—just snooped around behind Crabbe, with his coat collar up over his ears and his fists jammed down into his pockets.

But along in the spring, when the ice in the river was breaking up and they was talking of floating shells again I got around to talk to him. He stuck his funny old head in the shop one day, and I says, "Hillo," and he says "Oh, Hillo," and he come in and commenced poking around. And all of a sudden he piped up: "Rigger, d'you think that English stroke is all she's cracked up to be?"

Well, sir, of course I could have launched out right there. But I laid low, thinking maybe he'd talk—said "I dunno," or something like. Talk? Say! That child!

head was crammed to the eyes with rowing. In thirty-five years of honest work I never seen the beat. He had an idea about stroke; he had another one about the best way to time a race; and he had a hundred or so on the subject of slides, and backs, and outriggers, and blades, and balance. Course I hopped on most of 'em; it's the thing to do, with freshmen. And we had it purty good, back and forth.

And all of a sudden I come to and looked up. It was dusk. The old boathouse was still as a barn. And there was Crabbe leaning in the doorway.

That's how I come to know him. We had some good talks, after that, until it was April, and the sun felt good between your shoulders, and the open water below the bridge sparkled and danced like God had covered it over with diamonds. Then they put the boats in again.

And Strand, the first freshman coxswain, was took down with double pneumonia. It happened like that, all in an afternoon. They rushed him off to the infirmary, and I heard tell he stayed there three months. Well, sir, what do you think of that! Out my window I see this young Duffy, the green rube from some jerkwater Tennessee burg, sitting in the big freshman shell!

Done pretty good too, from all I hear. I mean, he didn't put on side, as the English says. Always a quiet kid, Duffy was. I never seen him bully a crew, take advantage of the fact that he was there to tell them what they did was wrong. And when Crabbe put him in the first boat, why he went on just about the same as before, soaking up all the information he could, steering his boat straight as a plumb-line, talking in that voice of his only when he had something to say. Not driving;

leading. And Lord! You'd ought to hear him come through the bridge, about five o'clock of those calm May evenings. You'd ought to have run to the window, like I done, and seen that long, shining cedar nose come a-plunging through that center arch, straight for the float. The white backs, not yet tanned proper, just gleaming like eight flags in the sun—bending down for the catch, stiffening, coming through and straightening out and swinging into each finish with a *swish—bang!* And down aft behind those bulging muscles, little Duffy hunched over like a bundle of rags, his big brown specs spattered with spray, his yellow megaphone stiff as a strut, the two white tiller lines stretching away astern of him toward his swirling, leaping, seething wake. Then the sing-song of his voice, that blue steel quiver humming in every sound, slow and even, carrying a mile:

"*Now*, boys, let's hump-her-up-a-bit. Let's put her home. (Mind your father, Six!) *One! a-way!* and *two! a-way* and *three a-WAY!*"

Well, sir, it was great. It was a miracle.

But Crabbe had a-plenty trouble with his freshman eight, that year. Too light they was. Rowed pretty as a picture, pretty as a Henley crew been at it without a shift for four years. But light! Well sir, Bow never weighed an ounce over hundred and thirty. And young Dineen, who sat at Seven, right where the weight *should* have been, he wasn't more than a pound or two over hundred and sixty-five. That shows you the set of those youngsters—how they shaped up. Come middle of May, they was rowing that two-mile course as clean and easy as you ever see, and making pretty good time, too, pretty

average fair time. But Crabbe done nothing but shake his old bald head. And I knew what he meant.

They were too light by twenty pounds to a seat. 'The Elis had a good big freshman crew that year, a good big bunch of husks. Crabbe knew and I knew. You stack up this lot of clean featherweights against those coal-passers, and there'd be nothing to it. They'd drive themselves plumb to death in the first mile, couldn't help it.

Well sir, Crabbe done just what you or I would have in his place. He had a heavy second boat. He looked 'em over pretty careful, his eye on weight, and form, and balance; and he snaked two heavy men out of that second boat and stuck them in the first. Young Rollins he put in at Number Five, right down solid in her waist. And Wagstaff, that two-hundred pound cow-puncher—he landed Wagstaff at Six.

At first she worked good. Me, I was surprised how good she worked, and I see Crabbe was some set up himself. They swung good together. They spaced out better. There was more drive, more punch in the boat, more good old lift to her bows on the finish. She ran smooth, like a knife through soft soap. She clipped ten seconds off her two-mile time.

Then I see there was a screw loose. Not in the rowing. Worse. In the men.

They come in one night. It was 'long toward the end of May. They come swinging up the runway carrying their shell, little Duffy and his tiller bringing up the rear. And this new man from the second, this Wagstaff, was talking. Lord knows what about, just shooting off his mouth promiscuous, he was, at all hands in general. The boys don't cotton much to a loud talker. I see those

freshmen hand out some black looks to the new Six; and Trench, their captain, turned his head and told him to shut up.

"Shut up?" says this Wagstaff, very free and easy. "Why should I shut up? The air's still free isn't it?"

And so on and so on, until they was into the boat-house and lost to my sight and hearing.

So that night I hoped young Duffy would stick his head into the shop and have a talk. Which he did.

"What's the matter with this new Six, this Wagstaff?" says I.

"Nothing. Why?" says he.

"Why, to-night I hear him passing the bunch a good deal of lip," says I. "And didn't Mister Trench tell him to lay off or something? What ails him?"

"Oh," says young Duffy. "Oh." His eyes was big and round behind those big round specs. "There's nothing the matter with Wagstaff," he says. "That's just his way. You can't have everything. He's got the weight the boat needed. Also he happens to have a lot of hot air. They ought to realize that different men are made differently. Some don't say much. Others have to talk all the time, or bust. He comes from Texas."

"But can't he be fixed so he'll quit? Won't somebody gag him someways?"

"Gag him? No. You can't gag his kind. It's in his blood. You can take him or leave him. But you can't change him."

"He'll wreck the bunch," I says. And I've seen it done. There's a heap more than rowing to winning a race. "He'll break 'em into little pieces," says I.

Duffy looked at me quite a while. Thinks I at last he

wasn't going to say anything. And he turned away for the door.

I bent down again over my vise. Then I heard:

"I guess not. . . ."

Well sir, it come time to move down to Red Top. So far as I knew there wasn't any chance in the freshman boat. But I wasn't in position to know, being pretty well took up with getting my shells down over that blarsted, freight-pulverizing railroad. But pretty soon we got settled down for the last ten days before Race Day.

And then I seen things stood just the same with those freshmen. Wagstaff seemed to get talkier and talkier every day. There was words between him and Trench; and one time I got an idea Crabbe was thinking of heaving him out of the boat. But he didn't do it. He'd looked pretty careful at the Elis. Man, they was heavy-hung! Crabbe knew and I knew we didn't have a ghost of a chance without the weight. Hot air or no hot air, Wagstaff was the goods. At the time trials, three days before the race, the freshmen done pretty fair. A pretty crew. A handsome crew. If only that blooming cow-puncher'd keep his yap shut, thinks I, we'd have a chance.

Then sir, the thing happened.

Little Duffy come poking into my shop; we was pretty chummy by then. It was the night before Race Day; and all hands was strung on taut copper, and feeling sort of fussy in the matter of food; and Crabbe was smiling a smile that looked as if somebody'd nailed it to his face; and the whole bloomin' lower river was jammed tight with yachts in rainbows; and there at Red Top we could hear the freight engines over in the yards col-

lecting cars for the observation trains. Hot, the air was; soggy-feeling, like bread pudding.

Little Duffy came mooning in. He went rummying around with his big specs, saying nothing. Thinks I, something on his mind. Finally:

"Rigger," he says, "what's this about ducking the cox?"

"Ducking the cox?" says I. "It's a fact. It's religion."

"Oh," says he, studying a fool monkey-wrench like it had a story to tell. "Oh. How do they do it?"

I picked up a gunny sack by one end and made him hold the other.

"Here's how," I says. "Two of 'em stand on the edge of the float, just like you and me here. And one takes his heels and the other takes his wrists, like we got this here gunny sack. And they give him the giant swing into the drink."

"The giant swing? What's that?"

"Huh! They swing him *once!* And they swing him *twice!* And they swing him *three times!* And on the third they let him go. And he rides up and out, and down."

We done as I said. And the gunny sack sailed across my shop and landed on the floor—*slump!*

Little Duffy stood looking at it.

"Oh," says he. "Oh."

"Now look here, don't worry yourself, Mister Duffy," says I. For I seen he was taking on over nothing at all. "Why it's just a joke, a lark. It's good sport, say them who's tried it. The current ain't so swift but that a man can hike right back to the float in a few seconds. And anyway, they don't do it unless they win. If they lose

everybody's too plumb down-hearted to touch you. And if they win, why what the devil do you care *what* they do to you, huh?"

And it come. I knew this lad was aching to win. Aching his heart out. But if he won? Shucks! thinks I, what's a little ducking!

I felt this Duffy looking at me kind of peculiar. And I straightened up and looked at him. The kid was blushing up to the roots of his red cedar hair. And his mouth was working.

At last he stuck it.

"You see, Rigger," he says—"you see. Everything'd be quite all right except for one thing. Ever since I was a little shaver I've been deathly scared of the water. On account of something that happened, that I don't need to tell you about. But I fell in once when I was at school. They had me in a place—a sanitarium, for a month, afterwards. My father told me they thought I was going to die. Just being scared.

"And so of course," he says, very loud, "of course I can't swim."

You could have knocked me down with a lick of cotton waste. I stared at him, standing there. It was the night before Race Day, mind you. And I swept my arm out at the shop, and the boathouse, and the float, and all the river beyond.

"Then how in the name of Judas Priest," I says, "did you ever get here?"

His eyes dropped down to the monkey-wrench, at that. He heaved a funny little desperate kind of sigh.

"I don't know," he says, very low. "I don't know. It just happened, I guess."

Fact. The sort of thing, as I told you at the start, that shows up in a lifetime and strikes a man all of a heap. Seems unbelievable, impossible. But there we was, the night before Race Day. Everything done, ready for the pistol. And there was Duffy.

Perhaps you can get a notion of what was going on in that infant's head, the death-clinch between what he hoped and what he feared. I could. I seen it all, from the minute he stood there and told me as one man to another, until the end. Even the race itself I seen, from Crabbe's launch, following the crews fifteen yards astern from start to finish. And that race was worth seeing.

I told you the Eli freshmen was husks? It was worse than that. Man, they was brutes! When they lined up with our bunch for the start it seemed like men against grammar school boys.

"Well!" breaks out that durned loquacious gall of a Wagstaff, right there at the starting line with the referee cocking his gun, "see the bloody beefeaters!"

I don't know if you're wise to it, but that sort of stuff ain't the thing. In the ring, now, you kid your man all you're a mind to. But on the river you pretend he ain't there.

It was awful, that line of Wagstaff's. Everybody heard it, Elis, referee and all. Beside me Crabbe cursed under his breath. Trench and the rest of them looked pretty sick. But Duffy spoke up quick as a flash. "Shut up, Number Six!" That's all.

Bang!

They got off to a good start, better than the Elis rowing smooth at thirty-eight. For a light crew they sure

was handsome and no mistake. Beside me Crabbe begun to lick his lips.

At the half mile they had a little lead, not much, about six feet. But the Elis had dropped down to a big sweeping, powerful thirty-two. Our boys was still up to thirty-four or five. They couldn't hold that stroke for two miles. I told Mister Crabbe so. "Duffy'll lower it," he says. "He wants half a length. Then he'll lower. That boy's an emperor." But Crabbe was watching Wagstaff, and licking his lips.

As the boats went under the bridge they was rowing just the same. When we come out into the sunlight again Duffy had his stroke at thirty-eight. He'd hit her up for ten in the dark—a trick he'd picked up. And he had that half length. Beside me Crabbe made a kind of noise. Might have been a chuckle. Sounded more like a sob. "I wish he was my boy," he says. So did I. But Crabbe didn't know what I knew.

Then he lowered: to thirty-six . . . thirty-four . . . thirty-two—and held her there. Gilkey at Number Two had begun to splash a mite. Rollins was white in the gills. It was a killing pace. They'd done nothing like it in the time trials. And there alongside of them rowed those baggage-smashing Elis, still at their thirty-two—driving her.

We held our breaths, Crabbe and me, watching to see if that lead would stay there on the lowered stroke, hoping, praying it would—fearing. And right then and there I got a new idea of what a sight hangs on a cox-wain's voice.

The Eli cox was twice as loud, twice as talky, as

Duffy. He was going on high all the time. He brayed at 'em. He banged and bullied 'em. He rapped his tiller-rope grips on the gunwale. He lifted his yellow megaphone into the air and bawled. He lashed that crew with sound. And they lifted her bows clear; and didn't gain an inch.

For little Duffy had those eight brown backs in the hollow of his skinny palm, underneath the noise of the Eli you could hear that blue steel ring; "*Steady! Hold her and drive her get away. Now! Now! Now!*" He fondled 'em. He pulled 'em. They rowed like one man, one giant, with all their muscles, and Duffy's head.

At the mile and a half the lead was three quarters of a length. The whole river, except for the lane down which them shells was heading, was jam-crowded. Flags blazing. Whistles tooting and snorting. And along the bank that old snake of an observation train, one solid long hunk of clothes. You could hear the women squeal; and from somewhere far off a big deep voice, all husked up with desire: "Come *on*, you Ha-ar-vuhd!"

Crabbe sucked in his breath with a little whistle. Wagstaff was talking.

"I thought they were—beefeaters," that blarsted fool crowed. "But they're tea-drinkers—instead!"

"Shut up, Number Six." That's all.

And then it come.

"Shut up yourself!" said Wagstaff. "Shut up and stay shut. We can lick these pink tea lizards without *your* aid."

I don't know whether you're wise to it. But on the river talking back to the coach or the cox—it's the unforgivable.

Man, it was a crying shame! In thirty-five years of honest work I never seen its beat. The last quarter of the prettiest race against odds ever rowed in the Thames. Three quarters of a length lead. And that boat of Duffy's just broke up into eight little helpless pieces, from sheer blooming, blarsted rage and shame.

Duffy worked like I never seen a cox work before. His voice never rose a note. But there was worlds in it. He stood up in his seat. His yellow megaphone fell all askew. If any human thing could have kept that crew together, Duffy would have done it.

Rollins was washing out. His face was purple. Two hundred yards to go. The Eli stroke was going up. I looked. There wasn't any lead. The two shells were neck and neck.

Duffy called for ten. His voice was like a knife. They got it up to thirty-five—*one, two, three, four.*

And that Wagstaff caught a crab. His blade kicked up the water. His butt pushed him back flat against the side. It was all over.

Beside me, Crabbe was crying like a baby, rubbing his brown bald head, back and forth, back and forth.

The gun roared. The Eli was over, a length ahead. The crowd seemed to rise up at you, screaming—waving.

Down in the stern of his shell Duffy was slumped into a little heap. Next day the papers come out with wise remarks: how he'd killed his crew in the first mile; how he'd ruined his chance of winning. One said it looked as if he didn't care much about winning.

Crabbe and me knew better. Especially me.

Well, we got back to the boathouse somehow. On

the way up we met the varsity paddling downstream for the big race. Nobody looked at 'em. We had other things to think about. And the varsity didn't need any encouragement anyway. It was a sure thing for them, that year.

We got back to the float. Crabbe disappeared. Training was up, and each man could do what he was a mind to.

It was fierce. Those freshmen didn't want to do *anything*. They just sat around on that float and the runway and up in the shade of the house saying nothing, just looking out at the river. Didn't even take their shell out of the water: left her laying alongside of the float, hitched by one outrigger, and the oars in the locks.

It was awful. If they'd started scrapping, or giving that Wagstaff the grand razoo, it wouldn't have been so bad. But no. Their manager pipes up, "Well boys, who's for a big feed at the Griswold?" Not a man answered; not a soul turned his head or batted his eye. They just sat there, looking out at the river.

I couldn't stand it. I went up the run and into my shop. I sat down in the doorway, where they couldn't see me. Nothing else to do.

Pretty soon, way down the river we heard a great goings-on. Whistles and horns and sirens. The finish gun. And a faint great wave of sound coming out of the thousands of throats down there.

Every cheer felt like a whip on my back. Inside the house I heard somebody, the freshman manager or one of the cooks, say, "That'll be the varsity winning by about five lengths." But down on the float nobody turned a hair. Those nine boys was changed to stone. They sat there, looking out across the river.

Then pretty soon, back upstream comes the big boat, going a good clip, followed by their launch. They was singing and laughing, and driving her for fair. And somebody sticks his head out of an upper window, and yells at Mister Foster, the varsity coach. And I seen him pick up his megaphone.

"Eight lengths of open water!" he says dancing around like a kid in the cockpit. "A walk-away! Yeee-ow!"

Down on the float nobody so much as moved. And the varsity shell come sailing up alongside; and they snaked her out of the water and up to the house, and come back for their oars, laughing and jabbering like school girls.

Then for the first time they seemed to take in those freshmen, still sitting there. And Stebbins, the varsity captain, stopped short and looked at them. A great big husk of a man, Stebbins.

He looks 'em over. And all of a sudden he says:

"Well! Where's that man they say threw your race, that Flagstaff, that Wagstetter party?" The varsity, you see, had heard things down river.

And there he was, sitting right there on the runway, looking like he'd do it again if he was so minded. And Stebbins turned his head, and talked low over his shoulder to Wilcox, his Number Seven. A great big husk of a man.

"What d'you say?"

Wilcox nodded. I seen him. And the two of them took one leap, and landed top of Wagstaff.

The rest happened quick. In two seconds they had Wagstaff down to the edge of the float. He struggled

some, his face all screwed up with peevishness. And he bellowed some, like he would. But golly! He might as well have laid still. Stebbins had him by the wrists; Wilcox had his heels.

They swung him . . . *once!*

And they swung him . . . *twice!*

And then they swung him . . . *three times*, and let him go.

But that Wagstaff was a big man, himself. It ain't no joke, giving a two-hundred pounder the giant swing.

One of them, Stebbins or Wilcox, I dunno which, held on too long. And Wagstaff didn't go far. His big body sort of twisted in the air, and turned half over. And just before the splash his head struck square down on the stroke outrigger of that freshman shell.

I stood up. Every man on that float stood up. It was no feather-tickle, that hit. The whole world got silent, like a big church.

Where Wagstaff had gone under, the water calmed down. And a few bubbles come up. And then something that looked like a big sea-turtle just rose up gentle-like and lay half awash. It was Wagstaff's back.

Maybe you know how it is, when something like that comes plumb out of the blue sky. I seen it before, especially around the water. There's something mysterious about the water, something a man can't understand. It's his servant, his friend, for a matter of years. And then all of a sudden it's a lean gray Thing that strangles in the dark.

You know how it is, maybe, when a thing like that happens—especially around the water, especially with

a crowd looking on. It's sort of as if every man jack had a stroke, couldn't twitch a muscle to move.

There we was, staring. There's the crowd on the float and the runways. There was I, in the doorway of my shop. And there was that big overgrown baby of a Wagstaff, knocked out by his rap on the outrigger, head under water, drowning by inches with twenty good swimmers standing by doing nothing.

Then I seen Duffy!

He was down on the edge, he was crouched like a rat. And I seen that little body of his go shooting out across the water, arms and legs a-flying every which way, and land with a splash right alongside of Wagstaff.

I yelled. It wasn't in me to keep the truth hid longer. I'd kep' quiet, for fear something would happen to the race. But there wasn't no need any longer. I put my fists to my mouth and howled down at that crowd.

"He can't swim, ye loonies! *He can't swim!*"

And the faces of all those boys down there snapped around to look up at me. But overhead, coming from the boathouse window, Crabbe's old voice says:

"Rigger, ye're a liar! He can swim like a duck!"

We looked again.

Don't ask *me* how he'd done it. I ain't explaining miracles, but telling the facts. In the five or six seconds since his jump Duffy had got that hulk of a two-hundred pounder alongside the float and his head up on it.

And the bunch come to life. They begun jumping around, slapping each other on the back, varsity and freshmen alike, shouting like they'd gone daft.

They hauled those two out of the water. And they brung Wagstaff to, and squeezed the water out of his lungs and patched up his head and put him to bed, where for a wonder he laid still and said nothing. And they rushed, squawking and singing and beating each other, into the showers to get dressed.

And the last I seen of 'em, that season, they was headed down the road to town. The whole bunch in flannels and their straw hats. Carrying Duffy on their shoulders. Little Duffy, peering out at the world from behind them big specs. And looking as if he'd come into a million.

Down the road toward town and the Griswold they went. Laughing and shouting. Singing:

"He could swim like a *fish*, he could dive like a *duck*."

And then they got around the bend, out of sight. And very faintly I heard:

"For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fel—*low*—
THAT nobody can deny!"

Turn that kid's head? It wasn't the kind you could turn. He was varsity cox for the next three years, and captain of the crew the last of the three. Those big husks—well sir, they swore by him. They fair worshipped that young terrapin.

They used to call him Little Duffy the Great. And he was.

CLASHING SKATES

BY REX LEE

YOU'LL get a big kick out of him, right off the bat, and then you'll think the world of him," Jerry Drummond was saying as they swung down the street.

"Oh, quit press-agenting!" retorted Bob. "Honestly, Jerry, I'm sure to be disappointed if you keep on talking."

Jerry grinned at his younger brother, half ashamed of his own warm enthusiasm.

"Well, now that you've switched over to Stanton—a real college instead of a one-horse kindergarten—you've got to get used to meeting real people," he remarked blithely.

Somehow, to Jerry, the elm-shaded streets of the old New England town seemed beautiful, and the late autumn weather more crisply fine, now that Bob was at Stanton. Jerry was twenty and Bob was only eighteen, but in some ways Bob was the older of the two. In any event, they were chums.

"This summer I'm going to get him to visit us at the camp," Jerry went on in his deep, warm voice. "He and Dad ought to know each other. They'll probably talk hockey without a break."

"Is Blythe one of those indoor hockey talkers?" demanded Bob.

"Why shouldn't he be?" returned Jerry, flushing a bit at the light sarcasm in Bob's voice. "He's always been in love with the game. I've told you about his career—played with the Eagles during the three years they held the amateur title, then with Montreal's world's champions, after that on three Olympic teams, and now he's the greatest coach in the world!"

"Well, I hope he doesn't talk too long to-night. I've got a bridge date in half an hour."

"Huh?"

Tall, steady-going Jerry couldn't believe his ears. Bob had made a date to play bridge, when he had a chance to spend an hour or so with "Babe" Blythe! Evidently Bob had changed during his two years at Jackson University. The older brother felt a vague sense of disappointment, as though a wet blanket had been thrown over his spirits.

"Well, here we are," he said flatly, as they arrived at the entrance to the Stanton Inn.

As they entered the lobby, where the bright lights bathed them, they looked not at all like brothers. Jerry was nearly six feet tall and broad in proportion. His huge shoulders made him seem shorter than he really was. Above a powerful torso, a square, rather dark-skinned face was the setting for a pair of steady, brown eyes. A shock of unruly black hair was always falling over his forehead, almost down to the bushy black eyebrows.

As they walked to the elevator, a dozen greetings were thrown at Jerry from the clerk, from lounging stu-

ents, from the elevator boy and the assistant manager. The greatest all-round athlete in Stanton's history, he was inevitably the most prominent person in town. There were covert whispers, too, about Bob.

"That's Jerry's brother," they were saying. "Never think it, would you?"

Bob was about as tall as Jerry, but looked taller because he was as slender and lithe as a snake. His hair was blond, his eyes a sparkling blue. His slim face radiated vitality, and his mobile mouth seemed always on the point of widening into a quick, bright smile. Magnetism sparkled from him.

They were complements of each other—Jerry realized that. Bob supplied something that the plodding, serious-minded older brother lacked. Bob was more carefree, laughing, and devil-may-care. His attitude toward life was different. That was the reason why the brothers, during those rare evenings when Bob wasn't attending a dance or a bridge session or the theater, could talk for hours about anything from religious beliefs to politics.

Jerry thought of the comparison their father had once made when he had seen them walking together.

"The greyhound and the St. Bernard!" he had chuckled, proudly.

In response to Jerry's knock on the door of 207, a cheery voice called out a prompt:

"Come in!"

"Babe" Blythe, otherwise Mr. John Summers Blythe, was rushing across the room, hand out toward Jerry's. Although he was compact, almost barrel-like, he gave the impression that there was not an ounce of

superfluous flesh on his powerful frame. His round face was beaming, his eyes twinkling brightly, as he pumped the hand of the captain of Stanton's hockey team.

Jerry's eyes were glowing warmly.

"It's good to see you again, Coach," he said slowly. "Just get in this afternoon?"

"Just got my slippers on this minute!" grinned the little Irishman merrily. "And this'd be Bob, eh?"

"Right."

The coach shook hands briskly with the smiling Bob, and then ran one scarred hand through a shock of red hair, shot with gray, as he looked the younger brother up and down. He didn't miss a thing in that inspection. He noted everything, from the fact that Bob's clothes fitted him perfectly to the fact that speed was written all over that slim body.

"Sit down, boys. Well, well, Jerry. So ye brought us another hockey player, did ye?"

Blythe had never lost the trace of an Irish brogue.

"You remember what I told you about the kid brother last winter?" grinned Jerry.

The player and coach were good friends—close friends—except on the ice, where the coach lashed every one impartially.

"You bet, and we'll need every man we can get, my boy. I've got news for ye. It'll be all over the campus to-morrow."

"What?"

"Sit easy now. I had a suspicion of it last year, so the schedule was made tentative. Jerry, Danville has dropped out of the Intercollegiate League, and Stanton takes its place!"

"Oh, boy!" breathed Jerry. As the information soaked in, his eyes lit up, his square face flushed, and his already wide mouth spread into a grin like a Cheshire cat's.

"Did you hear that, Bob? We're in the league! Chance to win a title, play the Canadian champions—"

"And don't forget ther'll be somebody going to the Olympic Games, Cap," grinned the bubbling Irishman. "How does it sound to ye?"

He asked that question of Bob, and the youngster smiled his flashing smile.

"Something to get excited about?" he laughed, and pulled the watch from his pocket. As he took a quick look at it, Blythe's eyes bored into him.

"Jerry tells me you're a hockey player," the coach snapped.

"Not much of a one," Bob returned carelessly. "I guess I've never particularly cared for the game. Played a lot, of course, and I'm going out for the team."

He rose to his feet.

"Well—it's been a pleasure to meet you, sir. I've got to run along. See you later, Jerry."

Graceful, indolent, he lounged out, throwing a smile to them both as he closed the door. There was an unreadable look on the coach's face for a second. Jerry knew that appraising glance. Somehow or other there was a sort of empty feeling in his own heart. If Bob would only take things seriously! Now that Stanton was in the league, Bob would have a great chance to make a name for himself. He thrilled.

"Coach, that's—gosh, it's marvelous! And we'll trim

those big boys to a lot of games! They're not so strong except Princeville—"

"They're plenty strong, Jerry, and Princeville is more than that. Ye think Bob'll help us, eh?"

Jerry got to his feet, the white sweater with its huge football "S" tightening over his body.

"I'm not putting in any plug for Bob because he's my brother, of course. But I'm telling you that he'll be the fastest man in the league. And dog-gone near the best stick-handler. And a great shot. I honestly believe Bob has the makings of just about the best hockey player that ever cut ice in this country!"

The coach bounded to his feet and walked to the window overlooking the quiet, tradition-soaked New England town. Jerry could almost feel what he was thinking. The coach knew that their father was "Bearcat" Drummond who had been, twenty years before, one of Canada's greatest amateur hockey players. And Drummond had brought up his sons to excel in the game he loved. All this Blythe knew, and what he was thinking was—

The coach whirled and gave utterance to his thoughts.

"If Bob's as good as that, Jerry, we might win the championship our first year in the league!" he barked. "How did it happen he decided to transfer here in his junior year?"

"It was Dad, mostly, with a little help from me," Jerry told him. They were sitting down, now, Jerry relaxed in his chair, and Blythe perched like an eager bird on the edge of his.

"Dad wanted him to go to a college where the played hockey," Jerry went on. "And so—"

"Didn't Bob want to go to a place that played hockey?" demanded the coach.

Jerry, never too articulate, fumbled for words.

"Why—er—yes, of course, in a way, but he was nuts about studying to be a writer, and there was a good course—"

"There are plenty of good writing courses right here," snorted Blythe. "And he buries himself for two years where he can't play!"

"He really was anxious to come here—after he completed his writing courses," Jerry said hastily. "He's the youngest son, you know, and—"

"He can't have much interest in the game," Blythe said disgustedly. "He must be cuckoo. But we'll see about it that he gets interested—if he can play like you say."

Jerry said nothing. Sometimes he thought the brilliant youngster did lack the qualities that made one enjoy a keen struggle, man to man. But still, years ago, when they both had been knee-high to grasshoppers, Bob had been willing enough to pitch in. Jerry grinned reminiscently as he thought of sundry blackened eyes. Some kid brother. Everybody—the old "Bearcat" most of all—loved Bob.

"Well, Captain Drummond," Blythe said with mock humility. "Looks like we will have the same team as we did last year, with another Drummond taking the place of Farwell, eh what? And listen, Jerry. Not for the world would I let the boys know it, but if Bob's what ye say we won't have such a bad team, at all at all!"

"No, we won't," Jerry agreed. "Jason'll hold up his

end with any center in the league, and Harvey's a goal keeper any team would be glad to own."

"The two backs, now," Blythe said judiciously, "are all right, but no world beaters. Princeville's pair of guards'll outshine 'em, outplay 'em, out-think 'em. There's Luden—he's a fair wing sub. At that, I won't be scared, except for Princeville—"

"Bob'll be as good as Hop Harvey," the loyal Jerry said slowly. "But I'm afraid I'll be the weak sister against Princeville. Their forwards are great!"

"Be yourself!" advised the coach scathingly.

He didn't go on to compliment Jerry, as he might have—sincerely. In all sports, Jerry was the dependable plugger. A left guard on the football team, through whom no rival quarterback sent a play when the yardage was crucial; a catcher on the varsity baseball team who hit an even three-fifty, and almost never missed a third strike or made a wild throw; a shot putter on the track team who always placed in any meet.

Even in hockey he was no speed demon, for a forward. But he was fast for his weight, and a skillful stick wielder. When he checked a man that man stayed checked. Tirelessly charging down the ice like an express train, he was a devastating part of the Stanton offense. Above all, he was a wonderful shot.

Just what trick of timing and wrist action he put into his shots was as difficult to understand as the drive of an easy-swinging Bobby Jones on the golf course or the lightning-like services of a Tilden in tennis. Certain it was, however, that when his stick met the puck no matter how short the swing, the rubber disk became a bullet that the eye could scarcely follow. He had been

known to shoot so swiftly that the rival goal keeper's first sight of the puck was after it had reached the net. As Babe Blythe had once privately told his friend Skim McCann, coach of the famous New York Nationals: "A goalie who could stop every one of that boy's shots could read the letters on a flying bullet!"

For two hours they talked of the team's prospects, and when Jerry started home, his whole being was suffused with a warm glow. In his last year at Stanton, he was to lead the tranquil, aristocratic little university's hockey team in its first battles against the lordly members of the Intercollegiate League. Stanton was small, it was true. But more than one president had come forth from its walls. Year after year its teams met the best of the bigger universities. Often they lost, but Stanton's traditions didn't depend upon victories. Never a man put off the field for foul tactics, never a team that laid down, never a team that dishonored, in skill or determination or *fight*, the intangible thing that was the Stanton spirit.

And now Bob was part of it, too. Side by side they'd lead the team against the best of the East. The out-of-town game with Princeville would be in Madison Square Garden, New York. In New Haven, Hanover, the Boston Arena, the banner of Stanton would be flaunted before the world.

For once Jerry could scarcely get his mind on the books that caused him so much dogged toil. Finally, before Bob came in, he went to bed. Bob's facile mind made lessons a plaything. Perhaps he didn't long retain what he'd learned, but the learning of it was mere play. A great kid, Bob! He'd go far, once he settled down and

took things more seriously. Stanton, the spirit of it, had needed that—

Jerry's shaggy head seemed to spread hair all over the pillow as he sank into slumber. Bob, coming in late, noticed the smile on his face.

"The old boy's having pleasant dreams," he grinned and then, suddenly, one of his rare sentimental moods came over him.

"Good old Jerry," he whispered.

The love between the brothers was by no means one-sided.

The next day, the college was thrown into a fever of anticipation by the article in the *Stanton Daily*, announcing the entry of Stanton into the Intercollegiate League. In an hour, it seemed, every man in school was talking hockey. Never had a Stanton team met five of the greatest universities in any sport in one season!

From that time on, the campus discussed every prospective member of the team. Jerry's restrained enthusiasm over his brother Bob, and that nonchalant young gentleman's record as a school player in Canada, made the younger Drummond one of the leading figures on school overnight. From the first he had been popular—now he was almost a ready-made hero.

Jerry was suffused with deep happiness, and his letters to the old "Bearcat" dad back in Canada were hymns of joy over Bob. The younger brother accepted adulation gracefully, as always, but half a dozen times a day he would make some such remark as:

"Gosh! They sure take their hockey seriously in the neck of the woods!"

Practice started earlier than usual, the team using

rink in the near-by city of Springfield every afternoon. There was no ice on the lake yet.

Before a week had gone by, Jerry was sure of one thing, and so was the dynamic Blythe. Of all the new candidates, and second-team players, lanky Jim Luden was the most promising. Practice revealed him as a first-class forward, capable of holding his own in any company.

Bob refused to exert himself. However, he did condescend to skim down the rink like a bird every once in a while, eluding the sweating second team with such consummate dodging and dribbling that they were left helpless. The puck, when he had it, seemed frozen to his stick.

These careless individual dashes were the only evidence of his potential skill, and Blythe constantly tongue-lashed him in an effort to make him play his best game all the time. Jerry quieted his own misgivings by thinking:

"In a game he'll play all the time, of course. Then they'll see something!"

And Blythe put Bob in, too. Harwell, very weak that year, was the first opponent. But before the game was half over Jerry knew something, deep down in his heart, that he dared not admit even to himself.

Bob was not giving his best. Time after time he made spectacular dashes down the ice, but when the moment came, near the goal, calling for the last ounce of effort, the fastest thinking, and that final bit of skill, then Bob fell short. He was the most beautiful and magnetic player on the ice, but he never got anywhere. He didn't score enough.

As the weeks went by, Jerry almost unconsciously began "feeding" his brother. Less and less often did he make those rifle-like stabs for the net, or start on those dashes himself. He desperately wanted Bob to beat out Luden for the team, because he thought Bob was trying harder—making more goals. And so, time after time in both practice and games, Jerry passed the puck to Bob so that the younger man might shine.

Jerry was conscious, finally, of what he was doing—making the team for his brother, and hurting himself in the bargain. After all, though, he himself was loaded down with athletic honors . . . and back in Canada Bearcat Drummond was reading half the papers of the East about the games, and sending page after page of advice to the youngster he adored.

The first four games of the schedule—Harwell, Dale Ruthven, and Darby—were against weak teams. But in each one of them, Jerry realized vaguely that Stanton had stumbled through, largely by luck. In the last two he himself hadn't shot a goal. Bob had two in each. Jason at center, fast, accurate and a great poke-checker, played like three men, and Stone and Brady, at the backs, were outdoing themselves. But something was wrong.

"My forwards aren't working at all!" Blythe fumed night after night. "No teamwork! Jerry isn't half the player he was. That Bob fellow needs a whole team to get a goal. Princeville'll ruin us!"

But here, again, luck was with Stanton. Hop Hadley, Princeville's star, wrenched his ankle, the week before the Stanton game, and Bugs Barton, his stellar man at right wing, got hurt in practice. It was a cripple

Princeville team that journeyed to Stanton and lost, four to three, after ten minutes of overtime. And though Stanton went wild with joy, Blythe cursed the ragged attack of his team and Jerry realized, heartsick, that the real Princeville team would have wiped up the ice with its own sextet.

Bob got all four goals, and from that time on there was no question about who was the idol of the school. That all four goals had been shot from directly in front of the net, after passes from Jerry, no one realized. Nor did anyone note that exactly nine times, Jerry, in order to pass to Bob, had thrown away chances for his marvelous long tries. Drummond, in newspaper accounts and the hearts of the spectators, was the mainstay of the team. Outsiders didn't realize that luck was carrying a stumbling team through its unbroken string of victories.

Jerry wasn't happy. His own game became fundamentally worse. He was always watching Bob, praying for him to do something brilliant that would count. And at times, when there was no hope of passing to Bob for the shot, he found himself hesitating, wondering whether to shoot or not. Time after time his indecision cost him the puck.

The schedule called for home-and-home games with the five other members of the league. And at this halfway point in the season, every other team seemed to harbor a jinx in its line-up. Injuries took their toll from each one—except the miraculously lucky Stanton. And all Stanton flirted with defeat when she should have been piling up big margins. A hockey-crazed college didn't realize that, however, nor did newspaper men,

who wrote reams of copy about the little New England college that was beating the best of the large universities.

Just a week before the final game of the season against Princeville, Ruthven, weakest team of the league, came to Stanton. At the end of the final period a stunned Stanton team stumbled off the ice, dazed and beaten, 5-3.

Babe Blythe, his eyes hard and shining coldly, said nothing, except:

"Get dressed—and think about Princeville. We're tied now. Tied with Princeville. Jerry, you go home with me."

Jerry's heart was leaden. Never, during the whole season, had he fed Bob so constantly. Bob, as always had been apparently the busiest player on the ice. He made more abortive dashes, more shots than any other player. And Jerry had just been among those present. Something told him that if Luden had been playing instead of Bob, the result would have been different.

Blythe came into the locker room again, after all the players but Jerry had left. Bob had departed smilingly a moment before, saying:

"Gosh, I'll be glad to get out of this morgue! Cheer up, boys. After all, a hockey game isn't going to mean a thing a year from now!"

Had Blythe heard that, Jerry wondered?

Jerry nodded dully, without rising from the bench. Suddenly the warm-hearted Irishman dropped beside him, and his hand gripped Jerry's firmly.

"It's tough, Jerry boy, and it's going to get tougher. I'm taking you off the team to-morrow."

"Huh?"

The stricken captain gazed long at Blythe. The coach turned away, and his jaw tightened.

"It's taken me a whole season to find out what was wrong with the team," he said gruffly. "You're rotten this year, and getting rottener. Worrying about your mother, maybe. Anyhow, Luden's better than you are right now. Thought I'd tell you by yourself."

Jerry got to his feet, and walked across the deserted, cluttered room. The captain removed from his position. His last year in school, the crucial game a week away— Oh, well, he could stand it, for Bob. He thought of his father, who was coming to New York to see that final game in Madison Square Garden. Bob would play, anyhow. Somehow, he'd like to tell the coach, as man to man, the feelings within him. But he couldn't—

"'Night, Coach. I don't feel much like talking," he said slowly, and walked out, his heavy shoulders drooping and his head down.

He walked across the campus, beneath its blanket of moon-silvered snow, and looked upward, as though to draw strength and comfort from the stately buildings and softly crackling trees. He walked to the edge of the lake, looking across its expanse of gleaming ice. Standstill. He, its captain, unworthy of his post—

Suddenly he straightened, his eyes as wide as though he were gazing at a ghost. He was tense. His heart pounded unbearably. His lips moved wordlessly as he strove to think clearly.

He walked up and down doggedly, fighting his fight, his brain working methodically toward the inevitable final. An hour later the fight was over. Pale and de-

terminated, he trotted toward town, picked up a night hawk taxi, and in ten minutes was facing a puzzled coach in pajamas.

"Sit down, boy. What's happened? I—"

"I'll tell you what's happened, Coach," Jerry said with painful slowness. "I'm traitor to Stanton, that's what I am. For the sake of my own family, I've been throwing down the team. I've tried to make my brother a star. It was for my father's sake. I've not played my own game. I—"

"I've been waiting for you to wake up!"

Suddenly Blythe was like a projectile loaded with dynamite. His eyes were flashing, and he strode up and down in uncontrollable agitation. Suddenly he whirled, his eyes blazing hotly into his captain's.

"And I had to kick you off the squad to make you see it! Cuttin' Stanton's throat, throwing down its students and its alumni for the sake of giving yure father a kick and yure brother a letter! And thinkin' ye were doing something fine I'll bet. I don't know whether I put ye back on the team or not!"

Jerry's eyes revealed the agony of his spirit. Slowly and methodically, he flayed himself as not even the vitriolic Blythe could have done.

"That's—that's all," he said, fumbling for words. "I told you—because I want a chance to—to do what I can to beat Princeville—"

His tumbling speech died, and suddenly he dropped to the davenport, his head in his hands.

And the next second, Blythe, his eyes impulsively wide, was beside him.

"Okay, boy," he whispered huskily.

Jerry, repressed and deliberate, had a hold on himself in a few seconds. The two of them—coach and captain—broke all training rules, that night, by talking until two in the morning. At the next practice, two days following, the second team fought, for the first time that season, against a savage hurricane on skates who sped the puck into the net from all angles.

At the close of the practice Blythe made an announcement.

"Until further notice, the first team will have Ludden at left wing, instead of Bob Drummond."

It was deliberately done, to sting Bob into life. As the announcement was made, Jerry watched Bob, without appearing to do so. He saw a smile flit over his brother's face—a contemptuous smile.

"Trying to kid me?" Bob seemed to be saying.

Of course it didn't mean a great deal. The squad had only three first-class forwards. Since substitutions were absolutely necessary, the announcement didn't mean that Bob wouldn't get into the game. It was meant to shame him. Bob knew as much, Jerry realized, and laughed at it.

Slow wrath gathered in Jerry's heart. The adoration he had for the brilliant youngster turned almost to hatred. He brooded savagely over the conceit, the carelessness, the selfishness of the younger man. Had he no pride whatever? Was there nothing that could make him smart—turn him into a fighter for the school?

The final week of practice was endless. Jerry couldn't bring himself to the point of saying the things he wanted to say to Bob. Their relations grew strained. Bob was coming hard. Carelessly confident of his position, he

jeered at the ridiculous discipline meted out to the star of the team.

Three-fourths of the Stanton students had raked and scraped money enough to make the trip to New York and as the tension grew steadily through the week classes became a mere gesture. Even professors found books boresome. When the special train departed Friday evening, faculty and students alike were a high-strung, taut crowd that slept little and talked hockey endlessly. The players, in their compartments, were nervous. Not even Blythe's endless stories, told to keep their minds off the game, could make them forget hockey for a minute. Even Bob caught the contagion of the situation. He talked ceaselessly, animatedly.

Jerry, eyes sunken and square face almost sullen, kept to himself, and not even Blythe could lift him from his lethargy. There was no exultant anticipation within him. He felt as though some light had gone out of his life. He'd play with all his heart and soul, but there would be no happiness in it. Bob was a quitter, yellow, selfish, and lazy.

Nor did Jerry's face lighten, and his heart skip a beat when he led his team on the ice that night. He glanced briefly at the breath-taking sight that met the eyes of the pale New Englanders, but no thrilling tingle swept over him.

The vast Garden arena was a solid mass of people—eighteen thousand of them. Educated to hockey by watching their two great professional teams play, New Yorkers had become enthusiasts, even for a college game. Rumor had it that five thousand Princetown alumni were there, and more than two thousand Stan-

on adherents. The boxes gleamed with white shirt fronts, and the attending alumni included many of the most prominent men in New York. The great Princeton players, in their orange and black jerseys, practiced with more nonchalance than did Stanton. They were accustomed to the Garden.

The whistle blew, and Blythe barked at his men from the box, as they gathered close. Now Bob's heart was in his eyes. That crowd had made him want to play, to shine brilliantly, Jerry knew.

"The best game we've got can beat 'em, bhoys!" snapped Blythe, and an electric current seemed to crackle north to his team. "Luden starts."

Jerry's last memory as he skated over the ice was Bob's drawn face, framing a pair of eyes that were gleaming with fury.

The next second, the game started. From the opening whistle, Jerry was so ferociously concentrated on the game that the crowd was non-existent. Cold and calculating, feeling none of the heat of battle, he nevertheless played with utter abandon. The rest of the team, lifted out of itself, moved like a whirlwind. Luden was playing a great game, and little Harvey, at goal, was a tower of strength. The play was in Stanton's territory most of the time—but at the end of the first period the score was nothing to nothing.

Two minutes after the start of the second period it happened. Luden tore for the net to get the puck, caught with his stick just as Harvey kicked it to one side after a shot, and attempted to swerve quickly. His ankle turned, and he fell.

He lay there, his face distorted with pain.

"Broke my ankle—sure!" he sobbed to Jerry, and they carried him off the ice.

Bob, skating out to take Luden's place, was pale faced, his eyes shining like stars. Blythe's words to him had bounced off him like a stone from a sling.

"Let's see whether you've got any guts, you!" Blythe had spat, but Bob had scarcely heard him.

Within a minute after play had been resumed, every eye in the Garden was on the slim, speedy Stanton forward. Bob, skating his best and handling his stick like a wizard, started a lone dash for the net every time he got the puck. He dribbled with dazzling skill, and never did he stop before reaching the guards. He didn't attempt to pass—he forgot teamwork as always. Single-handed he tried to reach the net, and every time, the great pair of Princeville backs took the puck away from him.

Jerry, feeling the loss of teamwork, was hot with wrath. He quit passing to Bob—began raining those rifle-like shots on the Princeville net from as far as mid-rink. He and Jason took the puck down time after time and always Jerry shot. Bob skated aimlessly about, frantic for his customary place in the spotlight. But, always, Jerry shot. A dozen times the crowd rose up thunderously, as the almost invisible puck sped from Jerry's stick. Twice, Boles, Princeville goalie, was hit by it before he saw it. But never did it go into the net. The three minutes before the close of the second period, Harold Hadley, Princeville flash, swept down on the Stanton net, followed through after a long shot from Bugs Barton, his running mate, outwitted little Harvey and shot the goal for Princeville.

It was a raging, disorganized Stanton team that

ated dejectedly toward the exit to the dressing room. The Princeville thousands made the rafters of the arden ring, and the band was playing the Princeville ng, but Jerry scarcely heard it.

Clumping along on his skates, he proceeded slowly own the runway leading off the ice. He was almost sob- ng for breath, so savagely had he played. Blythe, his ce grim and his eyes glinting coldly, fell in behind s squad.

"What's the idea of your shooting all the time?" me a harsh, youthful voice as they entered the dress- g room.

Jerry raised his burning eyes to his brother's.

"Because you never pass back!" he shot back. "You ere covered, the times I shot and we'd have lost the ck—"

"Oh, we would would we?" sneered Bob.

"Yes, we would. I—"

"Want to grandstand, now that you're playing in ew York, eh?" snarled Bob nastily.

The players looked on wonderingly, forgetting, for e moment, how tired and discouraged they were. ythe, in the background, almost held his breath as he w Jerry's eyes gleaming forth from that streaked, set ce.

Suddenly all the pent-up wrath and disgust of weeks oke overwhelmingly from the older brother. He was ing red as he looked at Bob—

"Grandstand, my eye!" he bellowed suddenly. "Why, u sniveling pup, all you are good for is to make runs the ice—and then lay down like a dog the second a ck comes up and fights you for the puck! You hold

it until it's taken away from you, so you can show off your skating and your dribbling! You never let loose on it."

"Shut up! Why, you—"

"Shut up, nothing!" raged the temporarily maddened Jerry, and the team shrank before his eyes. Blythe made no move. He hoped strenuously that it was all for the best.

"Why, you yellow, big-headed quitter, you've spoiled the team all year, and I, like a fool, have helped you. You never worked, never fought, never did a lick for Stanton! Know why you're here at all? Because all season I fed you, made you shoot, covered up your grandstanding and your yellowness! I made the team for you—threw down Stanton, threw down the team nearly got thrown off it myself, because I was trying to shove you ahead!"

Bob was crouched, his lips twisted in a snarl.

"Stop!" he yelled hysterically, "or I'll—"

"You'll what?" spat Jerry. "I could break you in little pieces and put them together again, so pipe down Grandstand! You're the worst grandstander ever born and the poorest fighter!"

Suddenly, to the furious elder brother, Bob's face became the center of the universe. He saw the terrible rage in it—and more. His mind raced back to their days as forwards on the school team in Canada. He remembered the night when the foul tactics of their opponent had turned Bob into a furious youngster, who was, for that night, the best hockey player of his age in the world.

Slowly the wrath trickled out of Jerry. The safety

valve had blown off, and he became himself. Calm, cool, scarcely thinking of what he was saying, he deliberately lashed the quivering Bob with his tongue. It was like a scalpel lying bare the rotten spots within the younger man. The squad stood like statues, watching in awe as Bob writhed, tears of rage in his eyes, before the sheer truth of Jerry's terrible tongue-lashing.

"I—I'll show you—show you all!" the tortured player shouted suddenly, just as the referee appeared at the door to warn the team that time was up.

Babe Blythe was afire. He had planned to play the substitutes for a few minutes to give the team a rest, but now he gambled his all.

"Get out on the ice—and the Drummonds will play this night!" he shouted. His voice seemed to vibrate against the walls and ceiling, thrilling the team with its fire.

The whole team seemed to feel that its one great weakness had been sought out and removed. Every man was alive with the lust for battle. It didn't matter that Bob Drummond went out on the ice with head bent to hide the tears, and that Jerry's face was like a death mask.

Then started that final period—a period that made onlookers forget the great battles of the professional teams. Jerry was a superman, raging over the ice, and Bob a mere flash of purple. Jason, at center, never missed a poke check, and the backs, when they were waiting for play to come their way, leaned forward with eyes burning, like eager vultures waiting for their prey. Princeville, playing as she never had before fought back desperately.

But Stanton's rush couldn't be stopped. Three minutes after the start of the period, Jerry shot from just beyond mid-ice and when the red goal light glowed, even the goal keeper could scarcely believe it. The spectators were on their feet, yelling every moment. The Drummonds were working together now, and scarcely was there a mistake. Bob was here, there, everywhere, the fastest man on the ice by far. Now, when he took the puck, he didn't hesitate to crash into the rival backs, or hurdle their sticks, or dodge and fight like a madman. Time and again, when Princeville had had a shot at the Stanton net, it was Bob who swept down the rink, got the puck after Harvey had stopped it, scudded around the net to gather speed, and carried it up the ice like a whirlwind. Sometimes he caromed it against the side wall, dodged around the Princeville man waiting to take it away from him, and scooted off, leaving a dazed opponent behind him. At the psychological moment he passed to Jerry or Jason, and the next second there was a vicious assault on the Princeville net.

Stanton was a team gone wild. The players were barking at each other—short, shrill yelps that were like the breathless battle cries of fighters giving their all. Up in the center box, on the right-hand side, Bearcat Drummond had already ruined a perfectly good derby hat and when people asked him to sit down, he fairly gasped "Drummond's my name, and they're my boys!"

Ten minutes, fifteen, eighteen. The crowd, their voices completely gone and the spirit of that epic battle too tremendous for cheering, sat back in strained, silent awe. Three-quarters of the time, the play was on Princeville's half of the ice. Never in his life had Lighton

he squat Princeville goalie, played the game as he did that night. Jerry's most savage shots he stopped, and many times with two fighting Stanton forwards trying to out-wit him, he emerged with the puck to throw it aside. Princeville's magnificent team was playing as it never had before—but Stanton was a team that had gone berserk.

Blythe, on the bench, was white as a ghost. It didn't seem that flesh and blood could stand any more—he should put in the subs—and yet he could not. For the moment, the greatest collegiate hockey team ever put on the ice was playing before his eyes.

Suddenly he leaned forward over the side wall, standing, his eyes blazing. It was Bob, skating around the Stanton net with the puck in his stick—skating like mad. Jerry had whirled, and was streaking up the ice, full speed ahead. Intuitively the coach sensed the beginning of an attack that would be the final effort of his team. One minute to go . . .

Halfway down the ice, the Princeville back and center were ready for Bob. Before this night Bob would have tried to elude them in a flashy manner, and lost the puck. Now, straight and true, he shot the puck to Jason, in the center. Jason flipped it to Jerry, along the right-hand wall. The inspired, fighting Bob had hurdled the sticks of the Princeville men where, before, he would have slowed up and skated around them.

Jerry took the puck, just beyond mid-ice. Suddenly there resounded through the vast auditorium a vibrant shout that sent thrills up and down the spines of eighteen thousand paralyzed spectators.

“Bob!”

It was from Jerry's throat—a plea and a challenge and an order in one. Bob had scarcely hit the ice after his hurdle, and he was a purple blur as he hurled himself for the goal. Jerry's arm moved—the puck was darting for the Princeville net.

The Princeville guard never saw it. It hit the goalie's shin pads, and bounced away, three feet to the left.

That cry was like the old cry of the pack. It was Jerry's agonized plea for Bob to remember the old combination they had worked back in school days in Canada—

And Bob knew. It seemed that he had traveled as fast as the puck. Scarcely had it hit the ice when he was up on it. His stick was swinging ten feet before he reached it. Through the tiny space between the bewildered goal keeper and the net post it sang, true as a die. As the red light glowed behind the net, Bob, flying like an express train, crashed with a thud into the barrier behind the net, and lay still.

He had given all he had to give.

Amid the wildest bedlam a hockey game in the Garden had ever witnessed the Stanton subs fairly danced onto the ice for the last half minute of play. Bob, stunned only, was trying to struggle to his feet when Jerry reached his side.

The older brother supporting the younger, the Stanton Drummonds skated slowly off the ice. Two thousand Stanton students and alumni were on their feet, and as the long Stanton yell, with three Drummonds on the end, crashed against the rafters of the Garden, sixteen thousand other throats poured out a tribute that almost drowned out the yell. Bearcat Drummond was crying

with excitement, and Babe Blythe was doing a cakewalk up and down the passage alongside the bench.

But the Drummonds didn't seem to hear the cheers. The kid brother was holding Jerry's eyes with his own as they limped across the ice.

"Did I—do all right, Jerry?" he asked simply.

"I'll say so, kid!" Jerry said gruffly, a choke in his voice. "Like old times—in prep school."

The crowd knew that it had seen a great game decide a hockey championship. Babe Blythe knew more than that, and it was in his eyes as he threw an arm over each of his forwards' shoulders. And Blythe was right, for that night saw the birth of the greatest collegiate hockey player since the day of Hobey Baker.

THE PANTS SLAPPER

BY FRANKLIN M. RECK

WITH his one free hand, Johnny Lambert pulled out his watch and held it under the dash light. the dial, cupped in lean brown fingers, read 11:30. With an involuntary exclamation he slapped his foot down on the accelerator and pushed his fifty-dollar roadster up to a nerve-shattering forty—every last mile the 'bus would do.

He'd promised the coach that he'd be back in bed by 11:30, and he was still a good eight miles from the State College campus. Fine example for a captain to set! Behind him he heard a challenging roar, and he veered carefully to the side of the concrete road—still going forty—to let the other car pass. Just then, around the sweeping curve ahead, he saw a pair of headlights swing. The car behind him had pulled almost abreast.

"Good night," he muttered, and slapped on his brakes.

Three cars abreast on a narrow road! The sedan beside him attempted to shoot ahead. There was a *zinging* scrape of fenders between the oncoming car and the sedan. Johnny ground to a shuddering stop; the sedan sped on and disappeared; while the other car, half off the road, slewed and bumped past, and came to a convulsive halt fifty yards away.

Leaping out of his flivver, Lambert strode lightly,

peedily over to the car that had been forced off the road. He glimpsed a sport roadster with two men in the rumble seat and two in front.

"Anybody hurt?" he sang out.

"Guess not," retorted a peeved, faintly familiar voice, coming from the driver. "But it's a wonder you wouldn't give a guy his half of the road!"

Lambert, slightly taken aback, was slow in replying.

"I refuse to take the blame," he said finally, with good nature. "It was just one of those things."

He peered closely and recognized the driver of the sport roadster as Russ Bergwin, scrub lineman on the state football squad, an intent, moody player who wasn't quite good enough to break into the strong state line-up. Bergwin was a Psi Gam; his fraternity house was across the street from Lambert's own.

"'Lo, Russ," Johnny greeted, thoughtfully. Russ, he noted, had a cigarette between his fingers.

"Oh—hi—Lambert," returned Bergwin, embarrassed. "My—my fender got a good scraping, I think."

"Sounded like it," grinned Johnny. His eyes swept over the other occupants. In the rumble he saw Bud Hill, halfback on the freshman team last year. Bud was also a Psi Gam. The captain greeted Bud, nodded to the others, and took a brief look at the scraped fender.

"Close call," he murmured. "Lucky. Guess I'll nurse my coughing chariot back home. See you to-morrow."

With a diffident parting gesture he hurried back to his car, hopped in, and started up. His mind raced with disturbing thoughts. Bud Hill and Russ Bergwin, members of the squad, going away from the campus at 11:30,

dressed up suspiciously well! And smoking. They were evidently bound for Watertown, twenty miles away. Watertown was an all-night place, the haven of escape for bored students. But it was no place for aspiring football players during early fall practice, when competition was hot and cuts all too frequent!

Bud Hill had plenty of reason to watch his step. The good-looking cuss was down in Coach Richter's black book. Lambert recalled the incident that had put him there. It had happened last April, in the final scrimmage of spring practice. He himself had played only a quarter hour and then had stood beside Coach Richter to watch the preps and varsity fight it out. How those two teams had scrapped! Like savages.

Bud Hill, as safety man for the preps, played a powerful game. In carrying the ball he was as deliberate as a checkers champion and slippery as a water snake. He seemed to run slowly, but with a deceptive change of pace and a side step that maddened the varsity ends and backs.

And then, near the end of the scrimmage, when the varsity had the ball and Bud—his black hair hardly mussed, a joyous grin on his face—was standing near his own goal line in the safety position, the thing happened that had put Bud down in Coach Richter's black book.

Cy Young, varsity full, savage because the preps had scored a touchdown, slanted off right tackle and tore the prep line wide open. Two backs dove at him, but the piston-like pounding of his legs shook them to the ground. Only Bud stood between Cy and the goal line.

Bud cautiously angled toward him, stepping gingerly.

Cy didn't dodge. He speeded up. His style was to crash into tacklers and ride over them. Cy was an impact player.

As the fullback thundered goalward, Bud stepped aside as though he thought Cy intended to dodge. Then, as the fullback passed, Bud dived at him, managed to touch his breeches, missed the tackle and rolled over and over on the ground.

To the spectator it might have looked like a heroic effort, but the coach had made a wry face.

"There's one boy who'll never do," he had said, a bit hourly. "He's a pants slapper."

Lambert had heard the remark and had known instantly that the boy was done. *Bud Hill, promising high school athlete from Spring Center, Indiana, pants slapper. No good.* Those words, Lambert knew, were deeply etched in the coach's tenacious memory. They raised the kid's good qualities.

Bud Hill hadn't made an honest effort—therefore he was out. That was Coach Richter's method. And it was a method that put the State College squad on its toes, made it eager to obey orders, eager to live up to a high standard. There was no shirking, no subtle lying down in the State squad. No grandstanding.

The day after the near auto accident, after lunch, just as Lambert was stretching his rangy frame in a veranda rocker, the varsity captain saw Hill cross the street toward him. They greeted each other.

The sophomore was ill at ease. "May I see you alone minute?"

Johnny leaped to his feet lithely. "Sure, c'mon up to my room."

He closed the door to his littered study and motioned Hill to a battered armchair. Then he waited, with a reassuring smile.

"I—last night," Bud began with difficulty. He shifted uneasily in his seat, then lifted his head with determination and looked squarely at the captain. "We were bound for Watertown last night—out for a good time. After the narrow scrape we had, we turned back. But—I want to make a clean breast of it. If we hadn't met you, we probably would have fractured the devil out of training rules. I came here to ask you not to tell the coach. I know we were nuts—and I want a chance."

Johnny looked at him soberly. He was appraising the sophomore and finding that he liked him immensely. The kid was direct and didn't play with words.

"What makes you think I'll tell?" he queried.

"Because you've a perfect right to," blurted Hill. "You're captain, and if you think a player's untrustworthy you prob'ly ought to let the coach know. But I'm not untrustworthy, Lambert—" his voice was shaking a bit "—and will prove it."

"I won't say anything," the captain reassured him. "You'll have your chance." He cast about for a way to tip off Hill to his own failing. After a pause:

"It's going to be a tough year. State never had such a schedule. We play two intersectional games—the last one with Hartford." He hesitated. "There'll be a royal scrap for positions. The squad is loaded with first-class players."

They traded glances and Hill spoke. "I know what you're thinking. That I'll have to tend to my knittin' if I

expect to make a letter. It may sound funny—but—I think I can do it.”

Lambert didn't smile. “I won't say you can't, Hill. But you've never worked under Coach Richter, and I want to tell you something about him. He's a lynx-eyed Dutchman. He can watch a scrimmage and see everything!” The captain's voice was edged with warning. “If you slip up on an assignment or pass up a tough job he spots it and doesn't forget. He doesn't expect you to do the impossible—but he wants your best. A bluff doesn't get by. He—he's darn near the best picker of men in the country.”

As he finished, he noted with disappointment that the warning didn't hit home. Hill's face radiated confidence. The sophomore was conscious of no weakness in his playing.

“I know how good the regular backfield is,” Hill was saying. “Cy Young at full. Sanders at quarter—best field general in the conference. Robertson and you halves. But just the same—” he was insistent “—I think I can break in.”

“If you feel that way about it,” Lambert was slightly irritated, “you probably can. But did it ever occur to you that as long as Cy smashes the line the way he does, he'll stay in? And Sanders calls signals the way Coach Richter would if he were playing—Sanders is there to stay. Robertson kicks—and how that boy kicks! If you're going to win anybody's job, it will be mine. And I intend to make it as hard for you as I can.”

Hill's black eyes snapped fire. “And I'm going to do my best to make a bench warmer out of a captain.”

Lambert laughed sympathetically. "Fair enough. More than one State captain has warmed the bench. Only remember what I told you about the coach."

"I sure will, Lambert, and thanks." Hill's voice had taken on its embarrassed note again. "I guess I seem pretty cocky, but I know I can carry that ball. And I didn't want to ruin my chances because of my crazy stunt last night."

"How about Bergwin?" asked Lambert. "Did he feel any—ah—pangs of remorse?"

"I told Bergwin I was coming over to see you," the sophomore said soberly. "He didn't say anything—he seldom does."

During the first three weeks of the season a formidable ghost hovered over the practice field at State. He was dressed in yellow headgear, his shoulders were broad, and his moleskin-clad legs were long and powerful. As the season progressed, he loomed larger and larger. Carney of Hartford State College players knew what he looked like, because papers from coast to coast carried his rugged picture. A chiselled face, with set lips and one eyebrow straight, one arched. Under one arm a football, almost hidden by the crouched body.

By the middle of October, Carney, Hartford full-back, had become the country's most noted player. He had made two touchdowns against the Southerners and three against Penn.

"We'll have to stop that baby," growled Coach Richter, "or we'll get a royal spanking."

Johnny Lambert, his muscles tightening, nodded. The season wasn't going any too well. In spite of her wealth of material, State had barely scraped through her early-

season games. She'd overwhelmed Tech 30 to 7, but Tech had always been easy. Against Lampson, a small college, she had been lucky to win 13 to 6. Her first conference game against strong opposition had been a disappointing tie.

Hill, playing with the scrubs, gave the varsity ends continuous trouble. Coach Richter, his scant hair blowing and his level eyes narrowed to slits, marked every misplay, every bit of faulty execution.

"You Farrell—and Dean!" he raged at the ends. "If you let Hill get by you every time he carries the ball, what are you going to do when Carney comes around your end? Get him! Don't let him suck you in!"

After that, the ends did get him—but not every time. Hill was a jerseyed wraith, hard to touch.

The varsity backfield—Young, Sanders, Lambert, Robertson—wasn't getting away as it had last year. And yet, no other combination seemed to do as well. Captain Lambert was particularly disgusted; and as he strode toward the field house after a grueling scrimmage, he opened up to Hill, who walked beside him.

"I'm not getting away, this year, and I don't know what's wrong. You've got something I haven't. How on earth do you slip tacklers the way you do? I haven't returned a punt more than ten yards this season!"

The sophomore's grimy face brightened. "I think I know what's wrong."

The captain looked up. "What is it?"

"You're running too fast," Hill asserted; and when Lambert's face showed bewilderment, he explained eagerly. "You go at top speed every minute, and tacklers let you all figured out. They can count on your speed."

Start out fast, then change pace. Go slow—fast—slow—and you'll make 'em miss every time."

Johnny's eyes widened. "Let's try it out," he suggested.

And there in the gathering dusk, Hill punted to Lambert, and Lambert practiced changing his pace—changing it so subtly that it was almost imperceptible.

"You've got it!" the sophomore cried exultantly. "Let's work out again to-morrow."

Against the strong Western university, Johnny gained a total of 110 yards and scored a touchdown. The entire team, heartened by his performance, played a smashing, machine-like game from the second quarter to the gun. The final score was 21 to 0.

Every evening, the following week, Johnny and Hill worked out for fifteen minutes during the warming-up session before practice.

"What are you two doing?" growled Young. "Playin' tag?"

And the captain, after each practice run, walked back to the scrub with a question on his lips. "How's that?"

From Bud, an enthusiastic grin, and a low-spoken "Better!"

The following Saturday, in an away-from-home game, the captain ran back a kick-off for a touch-down, skidded off tackle for long gains through a bewildered secondary, and returned one punt for sixty yards.

On the train coming home, with the squad playing cards, humming tunes, and chatting about what they'd do to Carney of Hartford, two weeks hence, Lambert

sought an empty seat and puzzled over a problem. Bud Hill hadn't been taken on the trip. So far, the sophomore hadn't played a moment. He was still on the scrubs; cheerfully, hopefully fighting for his chance. And yet Lambert felt certain that Bud was a better ground-gainer than he himself. Furthermore, Bud hadn't once repeated his pants-slapping stunt. Johnny decided to sound out the coach.

His chance came the following Monday afternoon. After a light practice, he strolled toward the field house beside the weather-beaten Dutchman.

"You've been doing a lot better lately," Coach Richter said. That was high praise, for him.

"I've gotten away once or twice," the captain admitted. "Bud Hill has shown me a wrinkle or two about changing pace—and sidestepping."

"Hill knows his stuff there," the coach readily agreed. "I was going to tell him to coach you—but you two beat me to it."

The captain paused. Then, knowing that it was useless to beat around the bush, he asked bluntly, "Where are you going to use him?"

"A year from now—mebbe two years," the coach replied, unmoved.

Johnny sucked his breath in sharply. "Good gosh, Coach, he's a better runner than I am right now!"

"It takes more than a runner to make a State team," Coach Richter replied with a touch of Teuton stiffness. "Hill's a beautiful runner. But he's not sound inside. I gotta have men I can depend on, and I can't depend on Hill."

Out of the corner of his eye, Lambert saw Bergwin passing close by and thought that the moody lineman looked at him queerly. Bergwin had made the last trip with the team, but he hadn't yet played in a game. He just wasn't quite good enough. But Hill seemed different.

"Hill's heart will be broken in two years," he said aloud.

The coach scoffed with characteristic impatience. "If his heart breaks that easy he's no good around here."

Lambert knew that he was treading on dangerous ground, but he decided to risk another question.

"Couldn't you tell him just where he falls down?"

"Tell him he's a pants slapper?" the coach said. "He wouldn't believe it himself. He doesn't know it. I'd have to catch him in the act. It would have to be a glaring example before he'd see it. If I get the right chance I'll tell him. If I don't he'll have to warm the bench and see how State men play the game. It takes time to break some of these high school stars of their wrong habits. Hill has been permitted for years to save himself. It's unconscious with him—involuntary. In time he'll work out of it."

That was a long speech for the close-lipped coach, and Johnny knew he could go no further. But he decided to warn Bud fervently never to pass up a tough tackle.

The captain and the scrub had become close friends. They'd worked out every afternoon on changing pace and sidestepping. Johnny, taking lessons from Bud, had become nearly as formidable a figure on the sports pages as Carney of Hartford. After each workout Johnny had asked, "How's that?" and nearly always the scrub had

been able to answer, "Better." The words had almost become a form of greeting, to be used anywhere on the campus with an understanding grin.

The next afternoon, at the beginning of practice, Johnny snagged a high punt, tucked the ball under his arm, and yelled to Hill, who was standing about thirty yards away: "Comin', Bud!"

He started running, alternately speeding and slowing his pace. As he drew close to Bud, the scrub started for him and anticipating his change of pace, dived hard and brought him down with a crashing thud.

"Have a heart," grinned Lambert, half-humorously, as he rolled to his knees.

"Why?" whispered Bud, and the startled senior looked up to see an entirely new Hill looking down at him—a black-countenanced, angry Hill. The senior leaped to his feet, but the scrub turned and walked away.

Heartsick, thought Lambert. Heartsick because the season was nearly finished and he hadn't yet broken into the varsity line-up.

A half hour later the scrubs and the varsity scrimmaged. Acting as interference for Cy Young, the captain dashed through a hole in left tackle and took out the first defensive back. Cy pounded on far into the secondary, and Bud—diving at him—missed the tackle. As on that day in spring practice, he managed to do a convincing tumble. Johnny ran up.

"Bud," he murmured, "you could have had him. He's a tough baby to handle, but you could have had him. Promise me you won't—"

But Hill walked away. It was the second sharp re-

buff the captain had received that day. Pained and bewildered, Lambert walked back to where the teams were forming.

"A week from to-morrow," the coach was saying, "we play Hartford. They've won every game. We've had a tie. Papers are saying the Hartford-State game will decide the national championship. Hartford has Carney, MacIntyre, and Walsh. You'll never stop those boys unless you try to remember for at least two days straight what I've been telling you. . . . Dennis, what's your idea in twisting and charging when there's nobody near you? And all of you—why did you trot when the referee took the ball back to the middle of the field? Never let a referee run you back. WALK. Save your energy!"

Lambert only half-listened to the coach's biting instructions. He was thinking that Bud had soured. And he was bitterly disappointed.

"What's wrong, Bud?" he asked the sophomore in the locker room. But the younger player, looking at his cleated shoes, didn't answer.

In the days that followed, Lambert's every friendly advance met with a cold rebuff. Hill's good-looking face wore a savage, intent expression. Whenever Johnny approached, the sophomore walked away. And finally, the captain, growing tense over the Hartford game—his last collegiate game—concluded, regretfully, that the misunderstanding would have to remain until he could collar Bud some place and good-humoredly wring out of the scrub an explanation. Bud was too good to sour that way.

There was a hint of snow in the air, and the ground was as hard as a concrete drive when the State squad—forty strong—clattered out from the south wing of the field house and trotted to the side lines in the shadow of the huge stadium. Johnny's steel-muscled body vibrated to the prolonged, crashing roar that thundered at the team from the human cliffs surrounding it.

Three teams took the field for a brisk running through signals, and Lambert's roving eyes caught Bud Mill playing on the third. The pants slapper—the kid who couldn't be depended upon! Johnny found himself hoping that Bud, somehow, would get into the game. That, alone, would make the youngster happy. And Bud was *good!*

The Hartford squad was already on the field, and the captain looked them over. Bright yellow headgears, blue jerseys. Number 35—that was Carney. The herded Carney! Boy, he was big! And he moved down the field with the peculiar loping ease of the perfectly trained and fit player.

Carney, like Cy Young, was an impact player. He liked to turn and crash into you. Before tackling Carney, Lambert had heard, it was wise to call up the college infirmary and order a bed. His lips closed tight. He hoped that he'd have at least one chance to dive into number 35 going full tilt. They'd never come too tough for him yet.

Captain Lambert was used to big crowds, to bands, to cheers; but when he heard seventy thousand throats resting with his name as he walked out to meet Captain Carney and the referee, his heart caught. With an effort he calmed himself, stuck out a steady paw, and

shook hands with his tall opponent. Carney smiled down at him—one eyebrow level, the other raised.

While the referee spoke, Johnny looked at his own crimson jersey, and dug at the hard ground with his hobbled toe. Then the coin, and Carney calling "Heads!" in a deep, rumbling murmur. Heads it was, and the Hartford captain took the north goal to win the advantage of a light breeze. Johnny chose to receive it. He had orders to get that kick off no matter where it went and run it so far down the field he'd have to ship it back air mail.

One thought ran through his head as he trotted back to his team, and one thought pounded in his brain as the team spread out—"Run that kick-off back for a touch down. . . ."

The swirling oval of humanity, the noise, even those yellow headgears faded into the back of his mind as he stood on his own goal and gazed at the white crossbar far down the field. Between him and that crossbar stood the best team in the country, lined up, to contest the way. But he didn't care. He felt fit. And his own team—those crimson-jerseyed stalwarts—they were great!

The sharp whistle. Stands hushed to silence. A hollow thud.

The ball came tumbling toward him. He stepped gingerly sideways to get under it. As it fell, he stepped forward, gathered it easily in his arms, and started down the center of the field where his interference was forming.

He scooted deliberately, straight ahead. Yellow headgears converged toward him, looming larger every minute. Some of them went down. Sanders was running

t his side. He stuck close to Sanders until a burly tackle came at him from the side and Sanders had to take him out. Now it was up to him alone.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw a yellow head. He slowed his pace. It skidded in front of him. Another yellow head, and he increased his pace. It tumbled behind. And now there was an open space before him. He let out and sailed along.

He saw Carney tearing at him across field. Carney would be easy. As the big player charged at him, Johnny speeded up until he was fairly flying—but just for an instant. As the body left the ground, he slowed. High over Carney's prone form he stepped. White lines passed. An increasing roar like a raging surf sounded in his ears—he speeded up—and just then something hit him from behind. He thudded to the ground with the ball tightly clutched in both arms.

He was dimly conscious of the wild, dervish-mad stadium as he rose to his feet and noted that just ten yards remained to be covered. The team huddled, popped to the line, and Cy Young cracked right tackle for six yards.

The next play was his. He ran wide to the left; then cut in sharply behind Robertson and dove like a streak of lightning for his hole. When the players were lifted off him, the ball was over. Hands pounded his back, lifted him to his feet, almost knocked him over again.

In another minute, Robertson had kicked goal over a nagrined, angry row of yellow headgears. The teams dotted back to the center of the field. Hartford, still determined to take advantage of the wind, was again kicking off.

On the side lines, wrapped in a crimson blanket, a bitter, black-haired scrub watched while the State machine systematically smashed the panic-stricken Hartford team into bits and scored another touchdown. Watched the yellow headgears, suddenly roused to fury, break through and block Robertson's attempted kick for extra point. If the scrub was elated at his team's brilliant playing, he didn't show it.

Through the second quarter he sat motionless, his brows drawing together more darkly, while Lambert continued to reel off long gains through a thoroughly awake, desperate Hartford eleven. Occasionally Bud's lips moved.

"I taught him that," they were mumbling. "I ought to be out there. . . . Lambert ought to be here, cooling his heels. The dirty . . ."

A whole season on the scrubs—tearing through the varsity time after time—and never getting a chance. Not one chance. And now he knew why. . . .

"Get your elbow out of my ribs," hissed the substitute next to Hill. "What's the matter—what're you sore about?"

The sophomore stared unseeing in front of him, numbed with the poison in the cup he was drinking. Then the first half was over and Bud was trotting stiffly to the lockers. Thirty minutes later, he was trotting out again, to warm the bench for another three-quarters of an hour. Then he'd go back to the field house to put away his suit for the season. An involuntary sob tore at his throat and he clamped his teeth sharply down to stifle it.

State rooters were thankful for that 13-point mar-

in before the third quarter was five minutes old. Carney—MacIntyre—Walsh, cool plowing destroyers, tore disastrously at the fighting State line. Plowed and tore into State territory. Then Hill's eyes cleared to see the great Carney loose. A gigantic, fearful murmur rose from the stands.

Robertson, from the defensive right half position, leaped across the field to head him off.

"Get him—get him—get him—Robertson!!"

Just as Robertson was about to leave his feet, Carney turned full tilt into him. They smacked into each other, but Carney's pounding knees battered the State player to the ground. Lambert caught him at the goal line—too late.

A half dozen players ran over to the crumpled Robertson and rolled him over. A few minutes later they helped him off the field and the substitute sitting next to Hill went in.

Hartford kicked goal and the score was 13 to 7.

Farrell and Dean, the ends, were tired and bruised. Carney began getting past them oftener. Five minutes after the light Sanders tackled him—and had to be helped off the field. Hill—who knew that he wouldn't be called—looked toward the coach half hopefully, but the coach summoned Simons. Within a few minutes, Simons came out with a wrenched knee.

How the shattered State team, without the help of Robertson's kicking, kept Hartford from scoring again in the third quarter was a mystery to the rooters. Coach Richter knew it was the heroic work of his two six-foot tackles in the line and Lambert and Young in the backfield. But Young had reached the end of his string,

and there came a time when he was unable to get to his feet.

Hill, gazing blackly into the ground, didn't even see Young come out. The blanket-shrouded player next to him nudged him sharply. "He's calling your name, Hill. Snap out of it!"

The sophomore leaped to his feet and ran to the coach, tearing at his sweater.

"Go in and help Lambert hold Carney," the coach said. "Lambert's nearly done." Then at the wild look in the young player's eyes, the coach grew doubtful. Finally he grinned, gave Bud's shoulder a pat, and repeated sharply, "Help Lambert hold Carney."

Lambert! Lambert! That's all Bud had heard. As he ran out on the field, the stands gave him a perfunctory cheer.

After the first play had been run off, Johnny—his drawn face breaking into a grin—said warmly:

"Golly, Bud, I'm glad you're in."

Bud looked at Johnny coldly and replied, deliberately: "It's not your fault, you dirty double-crosser."

The captain looked at the scrub blankly. Then, staggering slightly, went to his position at left half.

Hartford smashed center again for first down. On the next play Hartford fumbled, and a State lineman recovered the ball. In the huddle that followed, the captain patted the scrub on the shoulder.

"It's your turn, Bud. Show 'em your stuff. You can do it."

Bud threw a glance, full of hate, at the captain. They lined up, crouched. The ball came back to Bud. Johnny

ting as interference, scooted through the hole at right angle and smacked into the opposing half. Bud carried the ball with all his uncanny ability for 30 yards before Carney smashed him to the ground.

"Great work, Bud," Johnny said quietly.

Bud grunted and turned on his heel.

The captain, hurt, pressed his lips tightly together.

The quarter ended, and the tired captain drew the sophomore aside.

"What are you driving at?" he asked.

Bud, with smoldering eyes, spat back: "You know."

Johnny drew a deep breath: "I swear to heaven I won't."

The sophomore's bitterness of heart overflowed: "Why, blast you, Lambert, you know I've been warming the bench all season, and you know why. If it hadn't been for you and your lying tongue, you'd have been on the bench—not me!"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Don't try to soft-soap me. You know that when I started going hot on the scrubs you pussy-footed up to the coach and spilled all the dope about Bergwin and me skipping training early in the season. Bergwin overheard you and the coach talking on the way to the field house. Heard you agree solemnly with the coach that I couldn't be depended on. After you'd given your word! That's the way you kept your job, you—"

The captain was too weary to understand. "You've gone crazy," he said in a tired voice. "And you couldn't wait a worse time. Cut it out and play ball. Do you hear me? I've had—all I can stand."

Hill, steeped in anger, looked at the captain contemptuously. The teams lined up. State, in three plays, couldn't gain. An exchange of punts gave State the ball again on her own forty. Bud, spurred by his mood, released all his pent-up playing ability. A lithe ghost, he filtered through the heavy Hartford line, dodged the halves, and carried the ball to Hartford's forty-five. And again, to the twenty.

The air rocked with his name. He felt intoxicated. His grin returned, and except for the contempt in his eyes when he looked at Johnny, he was himself once more. The star—of high school days.

To give Bud a rest, Lambert tried the center of the line. A yard. Then, a short forward pass over the middle of the line, but MacIntyre, anticipating it, intercepted. Hartford's ball. There was less than ten minutes left, and Hartford knew that this might be her last chance to avoid defeat. Methodically, coolly, she proceeded to display the kind of game that had made her great.

Pile-driver smacks at the line. Sweeping slants, behind perfect interference, that crushed opposing ends and backs with high-explosive force. Johnny, playing like a wounded tiger at bay, found it harder and harder to rise to his feet.

And then the sanguine giant, Carney, broke loose for a second disastrous time. The play went to the right—away from Lambert's side. Completely out of the play, the captain nevertheless trotted gamely after it. He saw Bud Hill angling to meet the threat. Drawing in a hoarse breath, he prayed.

Carney pounded on, his knees going high. Hill dived, managed to get a futile hand on his bruising opponent,

en rolled over twice on the hard ground. A convincing attempt. Lambert groaned. Unmolested, Carney trotted over the goal line.

Searing rage fired the captain's brain as he saw the fresh, unhurt Hill roll to his knees. Reaching over with powerful hand, he grabbed the handsome scrub by the shoulder, lifted him to his feet, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

"You yellow pup," he whispered. "THAT'S why you haven't played all season."

"Let go of me, Lambert," cried Hill. "What do you mean?"

"I mean you didn't try to make that tackle!"

"I did too!"

"You did NOT. You just took a pretty tumble—that's all. You did it last spring against Cy Young. You did it again this fall. And now you've lost this game. Now do you understand why the coach said you couldn't depend upon? You're just a PANTS SLAPPER!"

Hill went white. His bloodless lips trembled as the captain walked away. The thing he had not known of himself was suddenly clear to him. And the knowledge was bitter as death. Dumbly, he stood between the goal posts and watched Hartford kick goal and take the lead, 14 to 13. For the kick-off, Johnny had to lead him to position.

"Forget it, Bud," the captain said, placing a hand on his shoulder. "You didn't know. Forget it. The game isn't over yet."

Hill came back to his senses; felt Lambert's hand on his back. Tortured with self-hatred, he shuddered—then fled away roughly. The pill had been too bitter.

"Don't touch me, Lambert!" he cried. "Keep your hands off me! I'll—you—"

Lambert, his face like a mask, walked back to kick. He got it off prettily, and Walsh of Hartford, catching it on his own ten, was downed in his tracks. But Hartford was in a triumphant, indomitable mood. Two plays netted a first down. A ripping smash at center put the ball on the thirty. Then Carney again cracked through tackle, and because he had once found Hill wanting, he made for the young scrub's side of the field.

The stands, sensing a complete rout, rose screaming, imploring. Lambert, dismayed, sped with all his might to the aid of Bud. The yellow-headed giant got up steam. The slender Hill, jaw set, waited for him. Then every muscle in the scrub's body seemed suddenly to spring into life. Carney sped for the side lines. Bud tore after him. Carney turned in and thundered straight at the now speeding tackler. Bud, recklessly adding every ounce of power to his run, hurtled at those pounding knees.

Crack! Carney stopped as though he had hit a wall. He was lifted high, and when he fell, his head smacked back against the frozen ground. The ball tumbled from his arms. Farrell, State end, who had vainly pursued Carney all the way, scooped it up, turned, and ran down the side lines like a scared deer. Nobody was near him.

Seventy thousand fans went crazy as he crossed the goal, futilely chased by a handful of Hartford players.

Lambert bent over the prone Hill. He waved nervously to the side lines and the trainer came hurrying out.

"Pants slapper," muttered Hill, trying—with eyes shut—to crawl to his knees.

"Sense knocked completely out of him," muttered the trainer. "He's coo-coo. Lie still, you heathen!"

Hill was struggling to get up. Overhead, the air was rolling with the State song. Finally, the sophomore's eyes opened, and cleared. He saw Johnny leaning over him. Saw the worried look in the captain's eyes. Remembered the shocking tackle.

"How was that?" he whispered.

Relief filled Lambert's soul. With a happy grin he entered the old password:

"Better."

BORROWED LEGS

BY FREDERIC NELSON LITTEN

OUT of balance," repeated Coach Norgren. He turned the snub-nosed starting pistol over in his hands and stared out across Exeley Field in meditative, absent fashion. Grouped around him on the grass beside the wide cinder running track, twenty nervous athletes waited for the axe to fall. Wiry Jerry Martin twisted restlessly; tense work, this waiting for the verdict—yet he felt fairly sure the coach would pick him for the sprints, give him his chance to make good as a high-speed racer. Johnnie Ransom, wearing the white, winged "E" on his blue track shirt, felt secure enough to nudge "Swede" Ahlberg and grin wryly, but the big fellow only frowned and stood there, solemn visaged, like the rest.

The coach went on.

"We're long on sprinters; fair in field events, but Ryan's been the only distance man to take a first this year. In the half-mile and the mile, we don't stack up at all. If we hope to make a showing in the Inter-academic—don't forget it's four weeks away—we've got to get some strength in these events." Another pause this time his eye reviewed the group before him and each boy felt the keen appraisal of that gaze. "I'm going to try some changes; shift you fellows round. Martin"—if he noticed the boy's dismayed start, he didn't show it.

—“I want you to work out in the mile, with Ryan, Barnes, and Miller. Your stride is loose and easy; you might find that it’s your distance. Keith, you and Prence warm up too. I want to start you later in the half. Now, let’s get going!”

He turned and led the way along the track to where a white post, planted by the curbing, marked the finish line. Ryan, Barnes, and Miller followed, slipping off their sweaters as they came. And big Swede Ahlberg placed his hands between the shoulders of the wiry youngster at his right, and with a huge, good-natured shove, sent him stumbling after.

“Hop to it, buddy,” he laughed. “You’re a mile now.”

Young Martin caught himself and straightened up. He whipped back at Ahlberg a sudden angry glance, his eyes hot with resentment at this mandate of the coach that drew him from the sprints to place him in that slow, dragging race, the mile.

But Ahlberg only laughed and waved him on, while Thennie Ransom chuckled:

“Don’t say it! Save your wind. Along about the second lap you’ll need it.”

And Jerry Martin turned slowly toward the starting post as Ahlberg and the others settled at their ease upon the grass to watch the tryout.

On the straightaway he joined the three men and, suddenly indifferent, dug his spikes into the cinders for a foothold. Coach Norgren, with the starting gun sky-pointed, stood behind earnestly exhorting. A stray breeze carried to the group on the grass. Swede Ahlberg chuckled.

"Same old speech. He's giving 'em—'with every stride, say WIN.' It's Doc's pet sermon, but at that he's right. Prof. Wheeler calls it good psychology. These birds sure need it too. Well, there they go!"

The pistol cracked, the runners broke away, sprinted a few yards, then settled to their stride. Ahead, Tim Ryan, his lean muscles springy, ran effortless; the other three trailed back, content to take his pace. They rounded the far turn, Ryan's stride already widening the gap between him and the men behind. Ahlberg pivoted to watch them on the back stretch, and shook his head in disapproval.

"That's bad for Ryan. Thinks he can't be beat. In the big meet, some bird's apt to pull his cork. He's not getting any good competition here."

Past the curve, into the straightaway the runners came, Ryan now leading by a good ten yards with three more laps to go. He passed the watchers on the turf, looked back at the plodders pounding in his rear, and threw up his hand in a derisive gesture.

Ahlberg nodded; said to Ransom:

"Sure, they're rotten. But Tim would be better if he didn't *know* he was so good. His form is jake, but a man who stays up with him till the last lap'll always stand a chance to win, because Ryan loses heart unless he's out in front."

The runners pulled around the track, the three men bunched, with Ryan drawing steadily away. On the third lap as he passed the squad again, he called:

"Swede! Watch my smoke!" and lengthened out his stride. He passed the finish line, and Coach Norgren fired the pistol signaling that the last lap had begun.

Martin, running second, responded with a desperate sprint timed badly, and when he failed to close the gap dropped to a walk. Barnes and Miller passed him, while Ryan, running strongly, circled the track, entered the straightaway and finished with a burst of speed, full twenty yards ahead.

Swede Ahlberg jumped up from the grass.

"Let's see what time he made!"

The big fellow, with the others on his heels, ran quickly down the track. They passed Martin, who was gulping great draughts of air into his lungs. Some joker called:

"Hey, Jerry! The mile walk's been scratched!"

Again anger shaded Martin's face. He brushed a stream of sweat out of his eyes. It was Ransom who had lunged that at him, he'd remember. Reluctantly, burned with bitter thoughts, he followed. His resentment grew. It expanded in a feeling kin to hate as he eyed the coach who stood there like some czar, with the track squad grouped reverently about him.

In Norgren, Martin saw an arrogant dictator, forcing on him and the others a decree from which there could be no appeal. Why should he, a sprinter of some promise, be dumped into this middle distance tryout, this time circling round a track, the goat for wisecrackers like Ransom? Not the mile for Martin; for him it was sprints or nothing.

He stood there glum and sour upon the fringe of things until Coach Norgren spied him.

"Martin," he said, "you didn't understand? A miler never starts his sprint before he's cleared the back stretch."

And Martin knew the color climbed up in his face, and hated more. He stood with sullen frown and all the others started. And then his pent-up anger crystallized. He answered hotly:

"I understand, but I'm no miler. First time I've tried it, and the last." A pause. "I'm turning in my locker key to-night."

Norgren looked him over gravely. In his years of training boys to stand the rigid discipline that is the first rule of the athlete, he had found a few who, like this moody fellow, seemed bitterly to resent his guidance.

"Martin," he said, in his fair, even voice. "I believe you're wrong. You have the distance runner's build. You have flat loose muscles and you're light in weight. There's just a chance that we can groom you for the Inter-academic Mile, to team with Ryan. We have more sprinters than we need. Turn out to-morrow and I'll work with you. You say you've never run the distance—I believe you have the makings of a miler. Why not stick?"

The boy's face did not change.

"Much obliged," he said, and turned the thanks into an insult. "I guess I'll have to pass it up."

He turned stonily away toward the gym, sensing, hostile at his back, the condemning stares of the astounded squad.

He skipped the shower and hurled his clothes on, hoping to be gone before the others came and so avoid the storm of disapproval that he knew was stirring in them all. He wadded his track suit inside a heavy sweater, detached from his ring the locker key, and climbed the stairs to Norgren's office, where he stopped

leave the key upon the desk. Emerging from the room he met Swede Ahlberg, carrying the pole with which a year ago the big fellow had hung up a record in the pole vault. He drew back quickly, hoping Ahlberg had not seen him, but the other called, half jokingly, half sternly: "Come out, you quitter—step on out here and take your medicine. What's eating you anyway, Jerry? You can't quit this way."

"Can't I?" Martin flung back defiantly, and stepped out into the hall, head up.

Big Swede Ahlberg's face grew a little grim as he met Martin's hard eyes. "Get hold of yourself, buddy," he advised levelly. "You can't go up in the air like this, and quit the squad cold."

"Can't I?" Martin hurled back again, his eyes unflinching. Yet down underneath he was heartsick at the realization that he was bringing down upon himself Ahlberg's condemnation—losing the big athlete's friendship.

For an instant longer, Ahlberg stood looking him up and down, but Martin's hot, hurt pride held him from giving any sign of surrender. Instead, he managed a sardonic little grin.

And that grin settled it.

"Martin," Ahlberg said coldly, "we need *men* at Exeter. Fellows who can put the school ahead of petty revenges. If you can't—you'll find you don't belong." He stopped abruptly as the door behind him swung back to admit the noisy squad headed by the lank Tim Ransom. A sudden hush fell as they looked at Martin. Ransom hesitated an instant, caught the defiance in Martin's glance, shrugged his shoulders and

went on. They passed him, all of them, without a word, until he was again alone with Ahlberg. Then Swede relentlessly drove home the significance of that silent passing.

"You see what we think of quitters here."

He waited for an instant. No answer. Then he too turned away, his long pole clanging down the hall, and Martin felt his eyes sting queerly, for this big senior's good esteem had been a coveted and prideful thing.

He wandered out across the school rectangle, and passed the dormitories flanking it on one side. The day was bright with promise of summer. Fresh green leaves dressed the trees, but Martin saw none of these things. His mind was in revolt against the coach, the school, and himself. The world was, after all, a rotten place.

Aimlessly he wandered, steeped in unpleasant thoughts, until with a start he came alive to find himself upon the business street of Exeley town. The post office faced him just across the corner. He drew his watch out. Five o'clock. Clark Borden would be sorting the mail off Number Ten. Old Clark, one fellow in the school whom he could tie to. He couldn't find a better, fairer friend to put the whole thing up to. Drawn by a wistful longing, he picked his way among the cars parked at the curb and went inside.

From the general delivery window Mrs. Cavey, the postmaster's wife and deputy, peered worriedly out at him.

"How's Clark?" she asked, her wrinkled face in troubled lines.

"Clark!" Jerry exclaimed.

"You ain't heard, and you his chum? He's dreadful sick; might be pneumony. Had to give up last night. Don't see how he kep' on like he did. Cavey tried to lay him off a week ago, but Clark's the kind that would not quit—" the word made Jerry wince, but Mrs. Cavey's thoughts were centered on her story—"and now he's like to be abed for weeks. We'll keep his place here, but he'll lose his night job with the gas folks. The lamps weren't lit till after nine last evening; then old Asa Peters made the rounds. He came in here 'bout noon to-day—said Mr. Whitlock was mad—told him to get someone else to tend the lamps—students wasn't no account." She bristled at the recollection. "Clark's a good boy; needs the money too. I reckon he ain't got much laid by. He'll have to leave the school and take a steady job to pay his sick bills when he's well—" she paused as a new thought came. Her shrilling words struck Jerry with cold apprehension as she concluded, "—if he *gets* well."

The boy stared at her numbly. Not get well! Clark! Nervy, peppy Clark, working his way through but finding time to star at center for two seasons on the Exeley football team; chief councilor in the student government; the fellow everybody wanted for a friend. Clark not get well! He bit his lip, thrusting back the thought. Then suddenly he swung about, ran out the door and through the streets of Exeley toward Roberts' boarding house, where Clark Borden made his home.

A car stood at the curb, and in the doorway, Dr. Burt was talking quietly with Mrs. Roberts. He stopped as Jerry turned in at the walk, sensed the question in the boy's worried face and answered gently:

"Clark's a sick boy. Pneumonia—both lungs. These spring cases go hard sometimes. To make it worse, he's worrying about the money end of things. Foolish, but I can't make him see it."

Something tumbled into place in Jerry's brain—as if a set of clashing gears had of a sudden meshed to noiseless movement. The thought came like a star through ragged storm clouds. Here he was needed. He could help!

"Doctor," he cried eagerly, "I'll hold his job—if they'll let me—Clark can keep the pay."

The doctor regarded him gravely for an instant. Then, satisfied by something he saw in Jerry's face, he nodded.

"You're sure you can see it through?" he asked, and added immediately as if confident of the answer: "Well, that will ease Clark—if he'll accept the obligation. He's independent, you know."

Jerry turned to Mrs. Roberts.

"May I use your telephone?"

She motioned him inside, and he stepped to the telephone, hurriedly leafed the pages of the directory, called the number he found.

"The gas office? Is Mr. Whitlock in? . . . Mr. Whitlock, this is Gerald Martin speaking. I'm an Exeley student. Borden, who tends the street lights, has pneumonia; I want to know if I may do his work until he's out again? . . . Yes sir, I understand that, but— . . . Yes, I know, but— . . . But, Mr. Whitlock, won't you at least give me a chance? I'll come down, and you can look me over—and you can call up Dr. Burt and

find out about me, and—what's that? I didn't understand, sir. . . . All right, then, I'll be there in less than an hour. . . .

"Thank you, sir."

He hung up the receiver.

Dr. Burt was standing just behind him, the hint of a wrinkle in his eyes.

"That's the way to handle Whitlock," he assured Jerry. "You can't blame him for being careful, but he's reasonable under his crankiness. You'll get the job, I'm sure. I know him pretty well, and I'll recommend you."

"That's fine, sir. Thank you." Jerry's voice was a little unsteady. Standing there in the hall, he could hear the hoarse labored breathing in the bedroom off the hall. The torn gasping made him feel weak and sick. His eyes sought the doctor's.

"We'll do our best." The doctor's voice was crisply bracing. "The first thing is to get Clark's mind relieved." He stepped past Jerry to the bedroom door, stood there a moment, then turned, took a few steps back and beckoned.

"Come," he whispered. "I'll let you tell him—just a word."

Jerry halted when he reached the door. The pain-hot, fevered face, the quick, labored moving of the chest beneath the white sheet, told him that Clark Borden was fighting a desperate battle.

Clark's flushed face brightened as Jerry stepped close to the bed. One hand feebly waved a brave attempt at greeting.

"Easy, Clark, old boy." With difficulty Jerry kept his voice steady. "Don't worry. I'm going to get it fixed up all right with Mr. Whitlock so that I can hold down your job. Just loaning you my legs," he insisted casually as Clark would have protested. "You can return 'em when your own are working." The doctor cleared his throat, a warning to be brief. Jerry stumbled on—"Please, Clark—you'd do it for me. Let me do it for you. Forget about the money now. Just get well."

The frown on Clark's face disappeared, and his eyes held the glimmer of a smile. He moved his lips, and Jerry, bending down, caught the faint whisper:

"—right—I'll borrow them—return in—good condition."

But on the street again, Jerry watched the doctor drive away; then headed for the gas office to clinch his appointment to Clark's job. On the way, he thought hard, trying to bring order out of chaos in his mind. His hope of wearing the white "E" with wings that signified a point man—that was gone. The friendship he'd built up with Ahlberg, Ryan, Ransom and the others—that was gone. Everything worth while seemed disappearing. In the sick room back there Clark lay, and over him a shadow hovered. Jerry shut that thought out. Then in a queer transference came to him the slogan that was painted on the gray wall of the locker room, "Fight Hardest on Your Back." He muttered the words aloud. Clark was doing that, and he, Jerry Martin, was game to fight *his* battle too, no matter who had said he was a quitter. He set his teeth hard, squared his shoulders, and lengthened the stride that was taking him to Mr. Whitlock's office.

Coach Norgren waited by the dormitory in the shadows. Dusk had come, the long twilight of the soft June summer. He watched far down the street yellow gas lights flashing on, each casting about it a narrow circle of illumination.

"A quaint old custom," he said, turning to the man beside him, "destined to be cast into limbo soon, along with other relics of your day and mine."

Professor Wheeler drew a deep breath and frowned.

"Yes," he said, "the village fathers say we must be modernized. But here's young Martin; so I'll leave you."

Down the street a boy came running, garbed in shorts and wearing tennis shoes, swinging in one hand a wooden rod. He stopped beside a lamp post; a quick movement of the rod, and the dead lamp grew bright. He scrutinized it carefully before he started on.

The coach stepped out to meet him and Martin, startled, swerved off the brick walk and pulled up short.

"Hi! Martin, got a minute?"

Norgren's voice, a friendly overture, brought to the boy a mingling of sensations. Three weeks ago his universe had tumbled down about his head, but from the débris had emerged a Jerry with a saner viewpoint. Pride still remained, but intolerance and self-sufficiency were gone. He drew a long, deep breath and turned square to face the coach. His face showed stern lines in the lamplight.

"I'm sorry, Doc, for all that happened—I was wrong—I can see it now. The fellows can't forget it. I don't blame them. But maybe you'll take my apology."

Before he had concluded, the coach had thrust out his hand. Martin put his own into it with an eager gesture

which to Norgren told how keenly the boy felt his isolation.

"Why, Martin, we *all* go off half cocked at times." The coach's voice dropped to a lower key. "I'll tell you something; not for publication. At Yale I had a nickname, 'Scrappy' Norgren. Figure out the reason for yourself. But"—here his voice grew solemn—"I'm disappointed that you haven't kept on with the squad. I seriously believe you have the makings of a distance man. It's temperament, Martin, that counts in track events. We coaches broadly group 'em in two classes. Sanguine—the sprinter, flashy, quick; saturnine—the runner with endurance, staying power. You have those qualities." His eyes sought the rod in Jerry's hand, then lifted to the row of lights along the dusky street. "Why not come out again?"

But Jerry shook his head.

"I wish I could," he said. "But I've lost out for this year. Maybe next season. If I'd only kept in training—but I didn't. Clark says I ought to have a good, stiff beating." He smiled and his face brightened. "Clark walked out on the porch to-day."

"That's fine," and Norgren nodded. "Clark's had a hard fight. Looked bad for him two weeks ago. But, Martin, you're in training now. Oh, I've watched you trotting over Exeley's streets these three weeks past. Ideal workout for a miler, except that you need a little sprint to loosen up with now and then. I still want to start you in the Inter-academic Mile with Ryan—not that we look to you for points. But it's experience for next year—and there's always the outside chance. Barnes and Miller, they're faithful fellows, but out-

classed. I don't expect to start them. Ardmore still has Bailey. He won from Ryan last year. A hard man to beat. He starts out with the gun and runs hard all the way. No sprint in him, but he led Ryan to the tape. You *have* a sprint—if you just knew what pace to take, how to hold it in that last ounce of reserve!" He said again, "It is just an outside chance—for Exeley." Then paused to let his last words register.

"Well?"

Martin looked at him clear-eyed and steady, fully realizing what humiliation he must meet in the scorn of his teammates, yet putting the thought behind him.

"I'll be out on Exeley Field to-morrow," he said.

Ryan sat up from the rubbing table. The locker room was redolent with smells of arnica and strong peppermint, the rubbing fluid. The fellow with the white badge pinned on his jersey had slammed the door shut, but hisaucous voice still filtered in.

"All out for the mile! The mile run. All out for the mile!"

Jerry Martin on a bench before his locker again drew tight the lacings of his running shoes. In the last four he'd laced them and unlaced them a half score of times. Now his palms were clammy with cold sweat, and as the door clicked again in opening he straightened up with a gone feeling as if his legs were drained of vigor. And then forgot it all, for behind Coach Norgren in the doorway stood Clark Borden, thin and white-faced, but smiling.

"I've come to bring you back the borrowed legs," he said. "See to it that you use them right."

Jerry's eyes blurred suddenly. All the pent-up loneliness, the strain of bitter weeks, had reached a peak. Well—one fellow cared to wish him luck. He took the hand that Clark held out to him and gripped it hard.

And Borden understood. All of his feeble strength went into his returning pressure, and Jerry felt a great surge of courage come over him.

Just then Ryan slipped down off the table. He had been watching the two gravely, and now he joined them. His arm dropped over Jerry's shoulders. "We're counting on you, Jerry," he said casually. "Give us all you've got. Swede said I was to tell you 'Attaboy' for him."

Jerry's face lit up like a thousand candles shining. He mumbled something, choked, and tried to answer, but again the caller's voice came faintly from the field outside:

"Last call! All out for the mile!"

"Sorry, fellows," said Norgren. "You'll have to finish your talk later. We need Jerry and Ryan for the next few minutes." The coach's under jaw moved forward just a little. "Ryan—you've got to win to-day. We have a chance! Of sixteen schools Ardmore leads with a total score of twenty-six. We're tied with Mercer Tech for second—just four measly points behind. The mile and relay yet to run. But the relay won't affect the leaders. Not one of us three will place a point. So it's the mile—THE MILE—Ryan—and you're our miler! A first, and Exeley carries home the cup!"

Ryan nodded, and the rubber handed him his bathrobe.

"I'll break the tape, Doc," he said, confidently.

Norgren turned to Jerry.

"Take this stop watch. Set your own pace. Don't try watch the others. Each lap, catch your time. One-teen should be right. Save something for the finish."

Jerry Martin slipped his fingers through the strap at Norgren held out, watched him fasten the watch side his palm, crystal outward, so it could be read. When the coach swung back once more to Ryan and smiled grimly as he whispered:

"Ryan—Exeley's pinning everything on you to-day!"

Out on the track, ten poised runners crowded elbows at the starting line. A stranger held the pole position; Bird out, crouched Bailey, Ardmore's ace. Two more; then Ryan with his trim blue shirt and gaunt shanks. Martin was the outside man. He closed his teeth together until the muscles round his jaw felt cramped. He'd do the first hundred in eleven if he needed to, to get the pole. The track judges were cautioning the fellows about fouling on the turns. No danger for him there; he'd lead them all—Bailey, too, as long as he could stay. The grandstands to his right were buzzing with excitement. He heard the shrill whistle on a peanut wagon but it sounded miles away. He wondered if old Clark were up there in the grandstand watching—then a voice, hard, said sharply:

"Take your marks!"

" ' set!"

And with the gun-crack young Martin drove forward, speeding like an arrow from his crouch. His spikes struck up the cinders and he felt the press of runners for an instant on his left. Then he was clear; he swerved

in, passed a blurry blot of blue, Tim Ryan—next a red shirt, Bailey—and he had the pole! Around the turn he swept, the crunch of cinders under flying feet behind him. The stake flashed by that marked two-twenty yards. It crossed his mind—he had forgotten to start the watch. He snapped the knurled knob with his thumb and in a panic stretched his stride, fearing lest he had set too slow a pace. The quarter passed, he raised his palm. The watch said twenty-six. Too fast! Against orders he looked back. The crimson shirt of Bailey was a scant five yards behind. He saw the others only as a blob of camouflaging colors on the slate gray track. Not fast enough! The Ardmore man was using him to pace. The thought lashed him like a whip. He ran on, hugging close the concrete curb—around another turn; another—he was on the straightaway, completing the first lap. He crossed the finish line. Some far-away voice called:

“Fifty-six! Good work, Martin!”

On he plunged, his mouth wide open, breathing heavily. He felt spent, like a falling bullet. The stands roared as he passed. And some derision, too, found outlet in shrill catcalls and shouted comments at the silly boob who thought the mile was just a quarter sprint. And then, as his tired legs drew round the oval, there surged up behind him mightily a giant groaning like the frantic “H-o-old ’em” of the rooters when their team lines up defensive in the shadows of the goal posts. Again he looked around. A tangled mass of men rolled in the cinder path, and sickening with the recognition he saw Ryan’s blue-clad form twisting underneath the pile! A spill—and Ryan no longer in the race!

He turned his head back desperately to shut out the

ght. At every impact of his spikes the whish of scattering cinders formed a sneering, measured whisper—and the whisper said, "You're through!" Now he was on the back stretch—two laps and a half to go—but he was done. His pace had been too fast. He couldn't breathe. The air seemed heavy; it wrapped itself about him like a bath towel; suffocating; choking. His legs too, they were leaden—and the track kept rising up to meet him, like furrows crossing through fresh plowed field. They said he was a quitter! He pounded on, doggedly resolved to fall only when the last thread of strength snapped. Another turn swam by; giddily he passed another and was in the straightaway again.

The dull roar of many voices beat about him. The cinder tangent curved and undulated, weirdly serpentine. Waves of sound vibrated to alternate the singing in his ears. All through—he'd make it to the turn—away from those unkindly strident voices—and lie down and rest.

Then strangely clear to Jerry, like a far-off station coming in, he seemed to hear again Coach Norgren's sermon preached out there on the Exeley oval weeks before—"with every stride, say WIN!"

Over him in succession, waves of courage, new vital forces, swept. He felt endurance conquer those tired muscles, build them up. The cinder track smoothed out before him. His vision cleared; his breath came freely; he'd got his second wind. His spikes sharply bit the cinders, and with every stride his lips moved. They said WIN!"

Once again they circled round, and Norgren, watching without hope, saw the boy's weary stride grow

firmer. The coach relaxed, wiping a spot of color from his lips, in the tension, his teeth had pressed.

At the finish line the gun cracked sharply. The last lap! Once more Jerry looked behind. The red shape of Bailey pounded on ten yards away like grim Nemesis overtaking him. He drew his breath in with a little sob—Win! Win! He must not lose his lead. The flying pointed cinders showered his legs. He pressed his nails into his palms. The watch crystal snapped. He did not know it. Ahead, that interminable stretch of mocking black that never ended. Behind, the pounding of the straining runner, marshaling the last ounce to close the gap.

The back stretch. Across the oval came the strident cheers of the mad stands. They called to him frantically beseeching him to win, but he was deaf to their calls. He heard only those crunching cinders in the rear. His stride broke—it seemed he would never gain it. Now he could read the number on the Ardmores' crimson back—"Forty-two." Mechanically, his own number flashed through his fevered mind.

"Forty-three—one more!" he figured wildly.

The turn in to the straightaway! On either side a throng of howling demons. Din—confusion—black smarting cinders—

"Forty-three—one more!"

The legs ahead were wobbling! His own heart was smashing at his ribs. "One more!" The tired muscles answered in a last supreme endeavor. He saw the crimson shirt come back to meet him! It hovered close! He passed it! Something struck his chest and snapped—and all the world went black!

Down in the locker room Clark Borden slipped the things from Jerry's running shoes. He turned and faced Exeley squad, crowding to reach Jerry's hand.

"This fellow loaned his legs to me last month. . . . You're witnesses; they were returned to-day—in first-class working order."

THE DIVING FOOL

BY FRANKLIN M. RECK

I STUMBLED on to "Sunny" Ray one afternoon in the pool at the State College gym. I had just taken a dive—a front jackknife—and was hoisting myself over the edge of the tank when I caught a glimpse of a flashing white body bouncing off the end of the springboard and scooting up into the air. That was Sunny Ray, although I didn't know it then.

What caught my eye was the surprising height of his dive. I craned my neck around to see the finish of it, meanwhile supporting myself foolishly half in and half out of water. What I saw gave me a warm thrill. At the very top of his dive, he bent easily at the hips and gracefully touched his extended toes with his fingers. He opened out effortlessly and was perfectly straight before he entered the water. The same dive I had just completed—only much better done.

A pleased glow crawled up the back of my neck as I climbed out of the pool and turned around to watch for the unknown diver to appear. I was puzzled. I know most of the divers in school. I'm the varsity diver myself. And nobody in school could do a front jackknife like the one I had just seen.

When the head finally bobbed up, over near the

polished nickel ladder, I saw a mouth framed for a laugh, and a pair of alert, chuckling eyes. A fun-loving fellow, if there ever was one. Not mischievous—but radiating fun.

I stepped on the board, feeling elated, somehow, and without a moment's hesitation performed a fairly difficult dive—a forward one and a half. That's the one where you make a complete somersault and a half and enter the water headfirst. The moment I completed it, I thrashed quickly to the ladder, climbed out dripping, and looked around at the board. Fun-loving was just stepping forward, and in another instant he was flying like a bird for the ceiling. High up, he tucked, turned one and a half times and slanted for the water like an arrow.

Golly, but it was beautiful! There was a rollicking challenge in it, too. Grinning all over, I strode out to the end of the board and rose up on my toes with my back to the water. Let Fun-loving try this one! Gathering all my strength, I leaped backward and upward, at the same time pulling my knees to start my body on its whirl. When the old sense of gravity gave me the order, I thrust out my hands backward and felt myself sliding into the water with a satisfying *suff!* A pretty good backward one and a half, I thought, as I scudded for the edge of the pool. And a blasted difficult dive!

I glanced quickly at the board. Sure enough, there was Fun-loving, poised with his back to the water and his arms extended for the jump—just as I had been, a moment before. Up into the air he went. His smooth, white body doubled into a knot, whirled too fast for the eye, and opened out into a perfect arch. In another

instant his pointed toes had disappeared softly into the water.

The perfection of it choked me. Why in the dickens wasn't he out for the varsity? I walked over to him as he vaulted, catlike, out of the pool.

"My name's Weed," I said, sticking out my hand. "Art Weed."

He gave me a firm grip and grinned at me. "Mine? Donald Ray—for no good reason."

"I just wanted to say," I told him, "that I know about three more hard dives, but something tells me they wouldn't stump you. Who'd you dive for last?"

"Nobody."

I was surprised. "You mean to say you've never done any diving in competition?"

Ray shook his head.

"Where in blazes did you learn?"

His face flushed at my abrupt question. "Oh, just—I don't know. At resorts and places."

"Freshman?"

"No. Second year. I came here from Simpson this fall."

"Why aren't you out for the varsity?"

"Why—I guess I never thought about it. Diving always seemed—well—fun. I've never taken it seriously."

"I think you ought to," I told him earnestly. "Why not be here to-morrow afternoon at three o'clock? That's when the varsity practices."

Ray's eyes lit up with pleasure. "Gosh—d'you think there's any use?"

I caught my chortle before it reached my lips, and

oved it back into its chortle-box. If he didn't know how good he was, I didn't intend to enlighten him. He'd end out soon enough.

"It won't hurt to try out, anyhow," I answered casually. "Will you be there?"

"Sure!" he came back, eagerly.

"Don't forget," I smiled back at him, as I started for the showers. He was looking at me, open-mouthed, once all alight. He didn't take his eyes off me until a group of fellows yelling "Sunny!" drew his attention.

"Sunny," I grinned. "Sunny Ray. . . . Just fits him. Oosh, I like him."

Thrills chased each other up and down my spine as I hurried through my dressing and hustled up to Coach Allen's office. Scotty Allen and I are good friends. I'd tossed a back jackknife off the Eiffel Tower into a bathtub, he asked me to. He's a good, hard driver with a well-concealed sense of sympathy and an unfailing sense of humor.

I opened the door to his office all keyed up, and as I always do when I'm keyed up, I tried to calm myself—tifle my feelings.

"Hello, Coach," I said, very casually, as though I had just dropped in to pass the time of day.

"Hello yourself," answered Scotty, barely glancing up from the trial cards he was studying. "What are you excited about? Has the United States declared war on something?"

"No," I replied, slightly disappointed. "Not since morning, anyway. I hate to disturb you, but I just dropped in to ask if you really wanted to win first at the Conference meet."

"I do have peculiar leanings that way," he smiled, still gazing at his trial cards. "But some of the other teams have the same silly idea—particularly Lawrence."

"Would first place in the dives help out any?"

"It would give us five points," he answered. "Why? Have you finally mastered that gainer one and a half? I always said you had it in you—"

"Not me, Coach!" I blurted, joyously. "I know my limit. I know that Kramer, of Lawrence, for one, can beat the tar out of me. But I've just discovered a kid who can spot Kramer ten points and then wallop him! Coach, he's—he's—"

Words failed me.

"He is, is he?" commented Scotty, indifferently. "Where'd you stumble on to him?"

Pent-up words rushed out of my mouth. "In the pool, just a half hour ago. Saw him do a front jack, a forward one and a half, and—gosh—Coach, his front jack would take him over a bar twelve feet above the pool. No kidding! And—"

"Does he keep his feet together?"

"Yes, sir! And his toes pointed. And he arches with his stomach instead of his chest—"

The coach began to look interested and respectful. I ran on.

"He's taller than I am, and slender, and graceful as a cat! He's a diving fool!"

I was just beaming, I guess, because Scotty smiled at me appreciatively. "When do I get a look at this phenom?"

"At practice, to-morrow. He's eligible for the varsity,

oo, because he's had a year at Simpson! Wait until you see him!"

"I hope he's as good as you say he is," said Scotty, looking at me quizzically. Then he leaned my way confidentially. "I've just come from a meeting of the athletic council. We went over the plans for the new field house, and the council wants to build the pool with only five hundred seats."

"Holy smokes!" I ejaculated. "Is that all?"

"There ought to be two thousand seats!" exploded Scotty. His lips closed in a thin line and his eyes burned so hotly at me that I thought my shirt would catch fire. "I'd give my right eye to win that Conference—show 'em! And a first in the dives would be a godsend. The athletic council ought to wake up!"

"Sunny Ray's your man," I yelped gleefully. "Unless I'm blind as well as cockeyed, there's no diver in this Conference can beat him."

"How about second place, too?" Scotty asked, looking at me intently.

I blushed. I'm only an ordinary diver, and the coach knows it. I just haven't the brilliance—the flash—that tramer of Lawrence has—or Sunny Ray.

"I'll knock off my usual fourth place."

"Somebody ought to knock off your block!" he roared.

I laughed. Scotty is always prodding me to be better than I can be, and I'm always trying. But it's like trying to make a silk ear out of a sow's purse—or whatever it is. It can't be did. I'll always be fairly good, but I'll never be sensational.

The next afternoon, at three, I undressed in record time and fairly flew down the steps leading to the pool. Frank Richardson and Jack Crandall, our two dash men, were already in the water, thrashing out their twenty laps. Several others of the squad were chatting and laughing near the springboard. These hailed me when I slid through the door on the wet tile. The coach wasn't down yet.

Over in the corner, sitting on a canvas chair and studying his curled-up toes, was Sunny Ray. I walked over to him.

"'Smatter, Ray," I grinned, "is your lunch doing handsprings?"

"No, I just—" he turned a slightly pale face upward, "I never did anything like this before."

"Don't worry," I reassured him. "It's just practice."

I knew what Sunny's feelings were. Fancy diving is the tensest, most nerve-racking kind of competitive sport. When you want to vent your energy strenuously, you've got to poise delicately—to make every move just so. And hovering over you, every minute, is the specter of a flop. Sunny, for the first time, was beginning to realize all this. I looked down and noticed him shivering almost imperceptibly.

"Better take a practice dive," I suggested. "Start the old circulation."

"I—I guess I'll wait a while," he replied.

Just then, Scotty came into the pool. I trotted over to him, brought him to the corner, and introduced Sunny.

"Just a minute," the coach smiled, "until I put this gang to work."

A few minutes later, after he had started the distance on their long grind, Scotty turned to us.

"All right, Art," he called, "go through your dives. You follow him, Ray."

I slapped Sunny on the back. "Give it all you've got," I whispered, and then started for the board.

I completed my swan dive—it felt like a good one—and clambered out of the water to watch Sunny. He was standing halfway up the board, nervously rubbing his hands together. He dropped his hands to his side, clenched them involuntarily, and started. Three steps on the board, a short final leap, and Sunny was traveling forward. His head was back, his arms outspread, and his body perfectly arched. But just at the top of his dive, he broke—bent at the hips—and dropped head-first into the pool.

"Gosh, Coach," I murmured, "that'll happen to anybody. He tried to go too high and had to bend to get down."

Scotty nodded. I went nervously to the board for my second dive while Sunny was climbing out of the pool. I was terrifically anxious for him to make good—to dive as beautifully as he had yesterday.

But he didn't. I don't mean that he flopped completely. He just didn't go quite so high, didn't turn so swiftly, didn't enter the water so cleanly. He was intent, nervous, and just a bit uncertain. His last dive was the back one and a half, and he splashed quite a bit of water on me. I turned to the coach. He looked entirely unconcerned.

"You wait," I said, earnestly. "You haven't seen anything."

"He'll make a pretty fair diver," Scotty said gently. "He's a bit green."

I felt like shouting: "Fair diver! You take my word for it, he's a natural-born champion!" But I knew there had been no evidence of it to-day.

In the next two practices—the last two before the dual meet at Lawrence—Sunny improved only slightly. He was trying desperately hard, but the realization that he was diving before critical eyes seemed to upset him. He couldn't call out the bounding, carefree brilliance that was somewhere inside of him. On Friday the team left for Lawrence, and Sunny Ray stayed behind.

We lost the Lawrence meet by a heartbreaking score—35 to 33. I placed second in the dives to Kramer. Kramer is a marvelously flashing performer—just like Sunny was the first time I saw him.

"Golly," I confided in the coach on the train going home, "I wish I could dive like Kramer! Isn't he beautiful? But—he's no better than Sunny. Not so good."

I said it challengingly, but I didn't get a rise out of Scotty. He just looked at me queerly. Made me want to duck my head, sort of.

During the next week, Scotty began driving the squad. The Conference meet was only three weeks away, and there was one more hard dual—with Tech. So far, we had lost only the one meet, and we had a fair chance for the big title. We worked like blazes and were happy. I had double duty—practicing dives and working out for the relay.

On the Thursday before the Tech meet I got down to practice early. Sunny was already in the pool.

"'Lo early bird!" I yelped. "Found any worms?"

"Fat, woolly ones," retorted Ray. "They're all gone. You might as well trot back to your nest."

"You don't trot to a nest," I reproved him. "You yelp. And here goes!"

I stepped on the board and did my swan dive.

"That wasn't high enough," chided Sunny. "You couldn't fly like an iggle. This way."

High up into the air he soared, like a zooming sea eagle. I whistled. *That* was something like!

"When an iggle has corns on his feet," grinned Sunny, vaulting out of the water, "he flies above a mounting and scratches 'em—like this."

Three slow steps, that predatory pounce on the end of the board, and he was again shooting for the ceiling. Way up there, he quickly jacked, touched his toes with his hands, and dropped. Straight as a plumb line. No wobble or dash.

I chuckled joyfully.

"What happens," I asked him with mock seriousness, "when an iggle has a cramp?"

"He makes for a cloud," Sunny replied lightly, "and wobbles up. Poor iggle."

Again he sailed skyward. Unbelievably high up, he rolled, turned one and a half times and zipped for the water. I was seeing the real Sunny now!

"Don't mind me," I told him weakly. "I'm just a round hog."

He made a couple of mysterious passes at me with his hands.

"Now," he announced in a deep, formal tone, "you're a naviator. A naviator hunting iggles. Chase me."

For a quarter of an hour we played our game. Sunny's

face was all alight. He wasn't on inspection now—he was disporting himself naturally and joyously.

"What do you two think you are," grunted Frank Richardson, who had just come in, "a couple of bounding porpoises?"

"Porpoises!" I bellowed. "He called us porpoises! Tell him what we are, Sunny!"

"We're iggles," grinned Sunny.

"We live in igloos," I added.

"And spend all our time iggling."

Frank Richardson backed away from us slightly in awe.

I turned to Sunny. "He doesn't understand," I murmured. "He's an eel."

"And eels," finished Sunny, "can't speak igglish."

Chortling foolishly, he ran to the board and did another perfect one and a half.

There was a lump in my throat, but it tasted sweet. I sensed that somebody was standing close to me, and I turned around to see Scotty looking keenly at the circular ripples that marked the end of Sunny's uncannily beautiful dive.

"I've been watching from the balcony," the coach said in my ear. "I'm beginning to understand."

"Wasn't that wonderful?" I gulped. "He's a diving fool, isn't he?"

Scotty didn't answer, but his eyes were shining.

I didn't sleep a lot that night. For about a half hour I lay in bed and thrilled over Sunny's performance. Then it occurred to me that he was the man to go to Tech with the team to-morrow night. I wasn't particularly needed on the relay. Either Wilson or Har-

od could take my place. And the coach couldn't take more than ten men.

"The ax," I grunted, half aloud, "will fall to-morrow."

"Shut up," growled a sleepy voice in the next bed. You just don't have any chance to be sorry for yourself at a fraternity house; so I turned over and shut my eyes.

The next morning, at breakfast, I decided not to wait for the ax to fall. At nine-fifty—between classes—I went up to Scotty's office. I knew he'd be in because he has swimming classes in the morning.

He was studying those blasted time cards of his.

"If you're trying to figure out why you should take no divers to Tech, you can quit," I told him. "I've got no exams next Monday, and I'd be just as well satisfied, you'd let me stay home."

The coach looked at me thoughtfully. "Don't you think you could win first at Tech?"

I had a good laugh. The same story.

"I *know* Sunny can win first. That boy—gosh—" Thinking of those dives he made yesterday left me speechless.

Scotty looked straight at the wall in front of him. I began to get fidgety—to feel that I had spoken out of turn. Tried to help him out with his job, and all that.

"I don't mean," I explained hastily, "that I don't want to go! I do—but—"

"Might as well break Sunny in," Scotty interrupted. "You'd better take a workout while we're gone."

I had a sudden glimpse of that rollicking squad of freshmen cutting up on the train and me sitting around a fraternity house.

"I will," I replied, getting to my feet and walking unsteadily to the door. "I—I'll take a workout to-morrow afternoon."

That night, when I saw the gang off at the train Sunny drew me aside.

"Gee whiz, Art," he blurted out, "this isn't right."

I grinned. "The best man wins, Sunny." I roughed him up a bit, to steer him away from anything sentimental.

"B-but," he said, holding me off, "I'm not sure I'm the best man."

"You've never seen yourself dive!" I chuckled.

That night, at the fraternity house, several of the brothers wanted to know why I wasn't out of town with the team.

"Trying out a new diver," I explained. "Sunny Ray."

"Is he good?"

"He's the coming champion," I asserted, with conviction.

"Heck," mourned one of the fellows. "I thought we had the coming champ right here in the house!"

"Don't be funny," I grunted.

Saturday morning I had a couple of classes. In the afternoon I went down to the pool and punished the springboard savagely. In the evening I went to the movie and saw nothing on the screen except my mind's picture of the team battling Tech—of Sunny soaring upward. After the show I hurried to the *Campus Daily* office to get the results.

"We won, 40 to 28," Spike Hanlon, the sports editor informed me, as he handed me the summary.

I scanned it eagerly to see how Sunny had come out the dives. Halfway down was this paragraph:

"Fancy dives: First, Marlowe, Tech, 108.6; second, Boyd, Tech, 102; *third, Ray, State College, 96.*"

Sunny had flopped! I knew what had happened just though I'd been there. I could almost feel the coldness that possessed Sunny's knees the first time he walked out to the board before a thousand rooters and three judges. Just like walking up to a blasted electric chair! "Just the same," I murmured, "he's the greatest natural diver I've ever seen. And he's going to win first the Conference!"

Monday afternoon, just as I went into the locker room to undress, the coach called me. He led me to his office, where he drew up a second chair and motioned me to sit down in it.

For a couple of minutes he scribbled busily on a sheet of paper, and then he shoved it over to me.

"Barring upsets," he said, briefly, "that's how things will stack up at the Conference meet."

This is what he'd written on the sheet:

	Lawrence	State Col.	Others
200 yd. relay	5	3	3
50 yd. dash	3	5	3
100 yd. dash	3	5	3
150 yd. backstroke	3	2	6
200 yd. breast stroke	3	2	6
440 yd. swim	2	8	1
300 yd. medley relay	5	1	5
	—	—	—
	24	26	27
	—	—	—

Dives

"We'll take first in the fifty and hundred, and we'll sweep the four-forty," he said. "Lawrence will take the relay and push us in the dashes. We haven't got a chance in the medley—we may take a fourth. Which means that the dives will tell the story. You and Sunny—" he paused.

I knew how badly the coach wanted to win the Conference. The athletic council was disposed to regard swimming lightly. And now, with the plans for the new field house under consideration, swimming at State College was at the crossroads. I had two visions—one of a spacious pool, built to accommodate thousands of rooters; another of an ordinary pool, around which a narrow bank of spectators sat hemmed in by walls.

"I haven't said much to the athletic council," Scotty said, reading my thoughts, "because I wouldn't have been listened to. But if we win the Conference, I will talk—and I'll get a respectful hearing."

I cleared my throat huskily. "Looks like it's up to Sunny and me, doesn't it?"

My face must have been kind of pale and long, because the coach grinned. "It is—but don't take it too seriously. Just give me the best you've got. And see if you can't work that self-conscious fear out of Sunny. He was utterly lost at Tech. It was a new and terrible experience for him."

Sunny and I did hard labor the first week. We bounced and bounced off the end of the springboard until the bottoms of our feet were sore. On two occasions Sunny was his own buoyantly unconcerned self, and his glorious diving made us jubilant. But during the second week when every practice brought the crisis closer, he seemed

lose his grip. He became uncertain—hesitant—fatal
its in diving! I plugged along at my usual mediocre
rel.

The coach looked on, urgently cheerful. But when
taught him off guard, his face was drawn and his eyes
it worried. The day before we were due to leave for
wrence, he called me aside.

"You and Sunny," he grinned, "have about wrecked
composure. At times Sunny is a marvel—at other
es he flops unaccountably. And you—well, if I didn't
ow you, I'd say you weren't trying as hard as you
ght."

He paused a moment, and then went on: "We've *got*
have that first in the dives. I've decided to take both
you liabilities to the meet, and I want you to talk
ny into the title."

He waited a moment, while I looked at him in blank
azement. Was the coach going nutty? His eyes didn't
k a bit wild—just blazing with purpose. He went

"Talk him into it! Take his mind off the ordeal. Get
t joyous look into his face."

"I—I'll try," I stammered.

The coach drew a long breath. "That's all I can
. And if you *really try*—" he looked at me long and
rchingly—"you'll win the Conference title for me."
I'd never seen three thousand rooters at a swimming
et before, and the sight almost unnerved me. We'd
ne through the preliminaries safely—Sunny and I—
ng with the dreaded Kramer of Lawrence, Marlowe
Tech and three others, and we felt good—until we
y that crowd. Lawrence has an immense new field

house and a tremendous pool, 150 feet long and 60 wide. Around it rise banks of seats almost to the high steel girders. They were jammed solid with spectators.

We sat down on a bench at the diving end of the pool, feeling awed and shriveled in our bathrobes.

"Thank the lord," chattered Sunny, "the d-divers don't come until next to the last."

I was too busy wondering how I could talk Sunny into his natural self to answer. At the moment, the job seemed utterly beyond me.

We had stayed in the locker room until the last minute, and the meet got under way almost immediately after we entered the pool. Before I knew it, the relay swimmers had thrown off their bathrobes and stepped up to the edge. They were lifting their feet gingerly and rubbing their arms.

I'll never forget that relay. One hoarse, unpunctuated roar accompanied the swimmers from the first lap to the last.

Lawrence led all the way. Frank Richardson, our last man—he's the fastest dash man in the Conference—made a heroic effort to overtake the purple swimmer and lost by inches. Lawrence 5, State 3. The other schools weren't going to count in this meet. It was a battle royal between Lawrence and State!

We took only a fourth in the next event—we haven't a good breast stroke man—and Lawrence took first. That made it 10 to 4. I shivered and blamed the cold. Attendants had opened most of the high windows, much to the comfort of the rooters and the discomfort of the swimmers.

Good old Frank Richardson took his expected first the fifty, and Crandall took an unexpected fourth. k points in one splash! Lawrence got only three. ate 10, Lawrence 13.

The long 440 grind was all ours, because we have the best distance men in the Conference. First and second place put us ahead 18 to 15. I noticed that the tense muscles around Scotty's mouth had relaxed a bit.

We were shut out of the 150-yard back-stroke, while Lawrence pulled a second. That evened the score at all. I felt almost exhausted with the tension. The crowd was hoarsely mad. I looked around at Sunny. His face was utterly blank, but his eyes told me he was having bad dreams. My throat was sticky and I didn't dare talk—but I had to. Only the hundred, now, and in the fancy dives. State College needed that big win! Time for me to start talking Sunny into the championship!

I felt like saying to him: "Snap out of it, you lily-colored, palsied pup!" But I felt that way, too—lily-colored and palsied. I clenched my trembling fingers and shivered my shoulders.

"Gotta be light-hearted—gay!" I gritted between closed teeth.

"Wh-what?" queried Sunny.

I laughed aloud. I hadn't meant that remark to be heard.

"I was just saying," I grinned to Sunny, "that you and I are letting this thing get our goats. And that isn't true."

I laid a calm hand on his bare knee and felt the tremor

of it. I was stronger, cooler, now, and some of my new-found composure must have passed to Sunny, because he smiled faintly. I nodded reassuringly to the coach, who was looking my way tensely.

The hundred was called. The squad leaped up and patted Frank Richardson on the back.

"Go to it!" we all muttered to him. I was tickled to see Sunny on his feet, too.

Frank won the hundred in 55.2, with the Lawrence man a body length behind, and the rest trailing. State 23, Lawrence 21! Lawrence would most certainly win first in the medley relay, and we wouldn't take more than one point. That would leave it 26 to 24, in favor of Lawrence—not counting the dives. We needed at least six points in the dives—Sunny's first and my fourth—to win!

"All out for the fancy dives!" bawled the announcer.

Sunny's face paled.

"Come on, Sunny," I said, calmly. "You need a bath—and it's Saturday night."

The squad milled around us, helping us off with our bathrobes and slapping us on the back. I hoped fervently that Sunny wasn't taking to heart their tense, eager expression. Every face said: "It's up to you!"

Diving is a terrific test of a man's nerves! When your muscles are crying out for vigorous action, you've got to restrain them. Thousands of eyes are glued on you, and you alone. You're the star performer, in a spotlight. And the slightest misstep, the least error in timing may cause your downfall!

Sunny's voice called me out of my nerve-racking thoughts.

"Are we going to t-take a practice dive?" he asked. I squared my shoulders. I had a job to perform. *This wet was up to me!*

"No," I replied seriously. "I'm an iggle."

"Wh-what?"

"I'm an iggle," I repeated, "and an iggle never dives. e swoops. Swatch me."

Without looking back at Sunny, I walked up to the board and took my first practice dive—a swan. As I climbed out of the water, I noticed the coach looking at me with a confident smile. I walked back to where Sunny was standing, rubbing his thighs.

"I tried to swash that beam up there with my tail feathers," I told him, "but I missed it. Heck."

Sunny grinned at me for the first time that night. "No wonder," he said, starting for the board. "Your tail feathers have moulted."

My heart bounded. Sunny at least had a comeback! I watched him eagerly as he poised and started forward. He sailed up—not quite so high as I could have wished, but still, better than I had expected.

I racked my brains for my next line. As he came to me, dripping, I smiled.

"You swished it," I said, "with a swooping swish. I'm going after it with a swipping swoop."

A little weak on that remark, I thought dolefully, as I climbed up and took my second practice—a running half liner. Streaming wet, I clambered out and walked back to Sunny, putting on an expression of mock disgust.

"I swiped too hard," I grunted, "and got all dusty."

"I swish I could swoop like that," he said, grinning. I chuckled joyously. Kramer, the Lawrence diver,

walking past us to the board, looked at us in dumb amazement. After Kramer, Sunny started up.

"If you get dusty, swoop down and swash," I cautioned him.

"All right," he chuckled. "Here goes for a swishing swoop."

"A swipping, soaring swoosh!" I encouraged him.

I could have wept out of pure joy. His one and a half was a thing of beauty, and I knew then that everything was all right. There'd be just one more crisis—when the clerk called Sunny for his first official dive. The nonsense chatter—silly as it seemed—was working on Sunny's naturally buoyant spirit.

"You fellows had enough practice?" an official near us inquired.

We nodded. I felt a tightening in my throat.

A man with a megaphone walked to the edge of the pool.

"The next event," he sang out to the crowd, "is the fancy dive. Each man is required to do four dives—the plain front, the plain back, the front jackknife and the back jackknife. After that, he does four difficult dives of his own choosing! First man up, Kramer of Lawrence. The plain front!"

Kramer did a good dive—too good for our comfort—and won a storm of applause.

"Ray! State College!" bellowed the announcer.

This, for me, was the critical point. Sunny's first dive!

"That beam, iggle," I whispered to him solicitously "is still dusty."

"'Sawful," he whispered back, "I'll swish it."

Sunny went so high on that dive that I was afraid he'd have to break. But he didn't. At the very top of his dive, his feet rose gracefully toward the ceiling, his back perfectly arched every moment. And that smooth entry to the water! Golly!

He walked back to me with a light-hearted grin listening through the water streaming from his hair.

"Did I get it?" he asked.

"Every speck," I gurgled. "I'll go up and polish it." I felt supremely confident now. Sunny, I felt sure, was going to come through!

And I was right. Every time he stepped on the board, he grew better. Not an uncertain step. No sudden hesitancy. And, all through it, we played our game. The crowd, the sober-faced judges with their pads, the loud applause meant nothing to us. We were too intent upon keeping that skyward beam immaculately clean. weren't we iggles? Iggles can not be bothered with mundane things. They dust the mountain tops!

I looked over to where our squad was sitting, noticed the look of awe on Frank Richardson's face and the happy smile on Scotty's lean countenance. My heart thumped fiercely.

Sunny's last dive—that marvelously sinuous thing of twisting turns called the gainer one and a half—brought forth an unrestrained outburst from the crowd. Not another diver had done so well—I felt sure of it.

Dripping and content, our play of iggles ended, we walked back to the bench. The coach bounded forward to meet us.

"Fine work, Sunny," he said warmly. Then he turned to me.

"Art," he grinned, "I didn't think you had it in you."

"It worked," I bubbled happily. "Didn't it?"

The coach just looked at me, his face all alight. The rest of the squad pulled us to the bench, wrapped our bathrobes about us, and rubbed our legs and arms with towels, meanwhile babbling joyfully in our ears.

I didn't respond to their outburst because I was trying to dope the status of the meet. The results of the dives would not be announced until after the medley relay was finished—that was the last event. Sunny's first and my fourth—if I was that lucky—would give us six points. Kramer of Lawrence had most certainly won second. That would make the score 29 to 24 in our favor. Lawrence would win first in the medley. 29 to 29! We had to have a fourth in the medley!

But we didn't get it. We were shut out completely. I felt sick at heart. That glorious diving—for nothing . . .

"While we're waiting for the results of the fancy dives," called an announcer, "I'll read you the status of the meet so far. Lawrence 26, State College 23—" As the announcer read off the other scores, a clerk walked up to him with a sheet of paper. I gripped Sunny's leg, hard.

"Results of the fancy dives!" bawled the megaphone. "Ah-ha! You'd never guess!"

I felt exultant. That was Sunny!

"First——" came from the megaphone "—Weed, State College, 108.4."

I almost fell off the bench. Me—me? A wave of hand clapping pelted the walls.

"—Second, Donald Ray, State College, 103.2—"

Another wave of hand clapping. Unaware of what I was doing, I got to my feet.

"He's—he's cockeyed!" I yelled. Unfortunately, I had picked a dead calm in which to give utterance to my thoughts. The crowd tittered.

"I'm cockeyed!" the announcer sing-songed. "I'll have to have my eyes examined. Third, Kramer, Lawrence, 99.8. Fourth, Marlowe, Tech, 94. Fifth, Henricks, Cole, 91.5. Final results of the meet: State College 31, Lawrence, 28—"

I didn't hear the rest of it, because about eight husky vimmers were trying to pull me apart. Still dazed, I worked myself free and walked to the coach. It wasn't tight, because I'm just not good enough to beat Sunny and Kramer!

"Sunny won those dives, Coach," I protested. But he just grinned at me. I felt the need of explaining myself.

"It worked out just as we planned," I elaborated infinitely. "I did what you said—talked him into it—"

"*You talked yourself into it*, you diving fool, you," laughed Scotty. "Haven't I been telling you all season you had it in you?"

I just stared at him, and if I looked as dumb as I felt, must have been a sight. *Me* Conference champion?

"Nope," I said, positively. "There's something wrong."

Sunny had his arm around my shoulder, and he tightened it, grinning.

"You've never seen yourself dive, iggle," he chuckled.

A SHERITON COACH

BY GEORGE F. PIERROT

GANGWAY for the Musketeers!"

The familiar cry—the cry well known to all Sheriton—rang through the Lion's Den. Fiery-haired Red Barrett, my companion across the dinner table, hastily gulped down an unchewed chunk of beef and rose with me to offer sweeping salute.

The door swung open, and in burst the famous three. In the lead, as usual, was the debonair Dick Lucas, varsity basketball captain, and a man who could, so everybody said, shoot baskets blindfolded. The restless, got-to-be-on-the-move type was Dick. He carried his lean, rangy self with a certain swagger—a certain sauciness that was not unattractive. You know how some fellows stand out in a crowd, just because they're colorful? Dick Lucas was that kind.

Right behind him came Healy, varsity center, long as a telephone pole, spare as a lath. And peeping drolly from under Healy's arm was Jud Graham, varsity forward, who was second only to Lucas in his ability to run up the score. All-conference players, these sure-fire three, and just as inseparable as the stars in the Big Dipper.

Red Barrett and I stood at salute, and so did every-

body else in the Lion's Den. Jovial hellos and thunderous back-slaps resounded right and left until the celebrated trio had found their seats.

As we slid back into our chairs Red soberly shook his head.

"Are they swell-headed?" I questioned, apprehensively.

"Sure they are, Flip. And people are beginning to notice it."

We dawdled over our dinner, for no good reason, and when we got up to go the Three Musketeers, loudly kidding the waiter, rose also. Dick Lucas, catching my eye, summoned me to him with a lordly toss of his head.

There was imperious command in the gesture—there always was in Dick's gestures—and it irritated me a bit. I'd earned some varsity letters in football and baseball myself, and I didn't fancy being patronized. But I went to him.

"What about taking a little excursion with me to-morrow, Flip?" Dick asked, mysteriously.

"Sounds interesting. Where to?"

"North Adams."

"I suppose you have a girl up there," I said suspiciously, "and want me to entertain her cross-eyed cousin."

"Wrong," said Dick. "I'm going to meet the new basketball coach."

"Is he coming to-morrow?" I pepped up immediately. *The Daily* said he wouldn't arrive until the end of October."

"Inside stuff," Dick said, with a knowing wink. "I've been tipped off that he'll get in on the Tri-State local to-

morrow evening. So we'll just sneak up to North Adams, board the Tri-State there, and chat with him on the way back. That is, if you're sure you want to come."

"Try and stop me."

"I won't," grinned Dick. "See you at the train." Whereupon he rejoined his impatient shadows.

It was mighty decent of Dick to ask me. And yet I couldn't squelch a less pleasant thought—that Dick would rather take a comparative outsider with him than share his little scoop with the two men who were his bosom friends. Some fellows are that way—a little jealous of the people closest to them.

That night I strolled down to the library and looked up the back copy of *The Daily* that contained the story of "Spike" Atwell's appointment as varsity coach. I scrutinized his picture—a long, spindly chap, sparse of hair and a bit stoop-shouldered, who looked more like an Oriental Lit prof than an athlete. But the story itself was certainly convincing. It ran:

Glen "Spike" Atwell, Cornell left halfback for three seasons and three times All-Eastern forward in basketball, has accepted the position of head coach at Sheriton and will report late in October. Gifford Lucas, chairman of the alumni athletic committee, who made the announcement this morning, said he had been negotiating with Atwell for several months.

For two of his three basketball years Atwell led the Eastern conference in scoring. He earned the distinction of captaining the Cornell varsity in his junior year, and is rated as one of the greatest players ever to perform on an Eastern court.

Atwell's most brilliant exploit in football came last season, when he intercepted a Dartmouth pass and ran 81 yards for the touch-down that beat the Hanoverians. Earlier in the season he had downed Columbia by a similar dash.

Atwell is twenty-five years old, and this is his first coaching job.

Twenty-five years old, and his first coaching job. I couldn't help thinking, rather grimly, of the way his predecessor had gone. That was Gar Evans, and a good man, too. But he hadn't got along with Dick Lucas, and quarreling with Dick was equivalent to quarreling with the other Musketeers. More than that, it meant a quarrel with Gifford Lucas. Gifford was Dick's father, president of the Tri-State railroad, and known as "Killer" because men who got in his way got out of it in a badly damaged condition.

Dick, when opposed, had all of his father's ruthlessness.

We got a lot of deference on the train. Killer Lucas is a name to conjure with, both on the Sheriton campus (he gave us our \$400,000 gym) and on the railroad which he largely owned. Dick, his face glowing at the march he was stealing on the rest of the college, chattered like a cagedful of canaries. Mostly it was basketball, and the things the Three Musketeers were going to do to the rest of the conference.

Going to North Adams the train runs for a time along a ridge, and you can see both directions across broad valleys. In the middle of one, three miles out, there clustered a forlorn group of dingy white houses. Even from so great a distance the place seemed unmistakably deserted. Dick saw me staring at this corpse of a town, and he smiled complacently.

"Dad murdered that dump," he said, contemptuously. And then, as I looked my surprise:

"Twenty-four years ago, when the Tri-State was just being laid out the tracks were routed through Michener. That's Michener you're looking at. The city fathers

fairly crawled on their hands and knees to get Dad to give 'em the railroad, but once he did they got cocky. That was when he asked 'em to give him, free, an acre of ground for a station and a freight shed.

"They thought they had him where the hair was short. Refused to play ball with him.

"Dad back tracked his engineers a couple of miles, shoveled a tunnel under the Rattlesnake Hills, threw a bridge across Tumwater Creek, and here's the road, with Michener three miles off it. It just choked the town to death. Nobody wanted to travel three miles to a train, not in the old days, when it took Old Dobbin a half hour to jog it. So everybody packed up and moved to North Adams, and Michener passed out of the picture."

"It must have cost your dad a whole lot more to switch his right of way than the acre would have cost him," I said, half to myself.

"Thunderation yes," Dick laughed. "Twenty times as much. But Dad wanted to show the chin-whiskered Michener hicks just where they got off at. It's the Lucas way."

The Lucas way. So it was. "Killer," they called the old man, and there was a metallic hardness to Dick, at times, which seemed to prove that blood will tell.

Our train was late into North Adams, and we had barely time to dash across the platform and tumble into the Tri-State, going the other way. Eagerly we hurried into the last day coach—the Sheriton spur doesn't handle enough traffic to justify a chair car—to find our man. But tall, spindly gentlemen whose hair was thin

and who were a trifle stoop-shouldered were just like perpetual motion—conspicuous by their absence.

“Raspberries!” snorted Dick, in disgust, and I echoed his sentiments. There was nothing to do but sit down, and that’s what we did.

It was infernally hot in that car—sometimes October, in our country, gets that way. Moreover, the coach was as old as a covered wagon, and its windows had long since lost ambition enough to open. First Dick tugged at ours until his jaw about burst through his face, and then I spelled him and lifted until I was afraid my feet would puncture the floor.

“Give me a try,” said a cool voice, as a broad-shouldered chap brushed by me.

He took a firm hold on the catches, braced himself, and heaved. With a protesting screech the window gave way a couple of inches.

“That’s better,” said the stranger, pleasantly. He slipped long fingers into the crack, and pulled upward until the back of his coat bulged like a balloon.

We heard the groan of tortured wood, a sharp splintering, and the splash of broken glass on the floor.

“Well, I guess we get our air,” grinned Dick. “Gosh, but you must be Hercules’ second cousin. Cut yourself?”

“No.”

We shoved back the seat in front of us and made a breeze, all the way to Sheriton. Our new friend, medium height but husky, with blue eyes, straight-up, sandy hair, and a square-cut face, made a quiet, interesting companion.

As usual Dick preëmpted the stage, and basketball was the topic. He poured out the story of Sheriton’s last

several years on the court, and he didn't fail to do full justice to the prowess of the Musketeers.

"I hope you're interested in athletics," I put in desperately, once, as Dick paused for second wind.

"I'm interested in everything," came the reassuring answer.

We got off together, at Sheriton. As the stranger, suitcase in either hand, alighted there rushed up a round, chubby little man whose voluminous body seemed to be trying to escape from his clothes.

"I'm Stubby Cooper, graduate manager," he introduced himself.

"Glad to see you," greeted our stranger. "I'm Atwell."

"The new coach," somebody whispered, in awe. And it was. *The Daily* must have got its photos mixed—later I found out that that was what had happened. And both Dick and I had been fooled.

Anyway, my jaw hit my chest. I gasped, and turned to Dick. His head was back, and his face was flaming like a sun going down.

"You're pretty poor," he spit out, at Atwell.

"I seem to have made a bad impression," said that gentleman, composedly. "What's wrong?"

"You let me tell you all about myself," exploded Dick. There was insult in his furious voice.

Atwell's eyes bored into him.

"You seemed to enjoy doing it," he said.

"You knew I was the basketball captain," Dick fairly shouted. "Why didn't you tell me you were the new coach? You knew I'd come all the way to North Adams to get an advance look at you."

"Perhaps," answered Atwell quietly, "I wanted to get an advance look at *you*."

Dick, his face contorted, whirled and disappeared. The station folk, their spirits dampened, edged away. Before I could collect my wits and apologize to Atwell for Dick's misbehavior, Cooper, a bit dazed, led him to the waiting automobile.

My thoughts churned like a mill race, all the way home. I liked Atwell immensely, just as I had liked his predecessor, Gar Evans. Atwell was "in bad" with Dick. Gar had been "in bad" with Dick, too, and where was Gar now? There was Killer to be reckoned with.

That night I found it hard to sleep.

The campus heard about "Spike" Atwell's arrival, and about Dick's quarrel with him, at one and the same time. The story was on everybody's lips for several days, and of course it came to have many versions. The net result, however, was that there was almost more interest in basketball than in football, even though football season was in full swing.

Atwell fitted quietly into the campus scheme of things. He spent his time circulating about, getting acquainted with his squad and everybody else. I made it a point to call on him, first thing, taking with me the genial Red Garrett. I wanted to show him that Dick and I were two different persons, so far as getting sore was concerned.

He was mighty cordial, and of course he didn't mention Dick. I could see that behind that rugged face of his, and those calm eyes, there burned a determination to make good his first year. A coach who flivvers on his opening job finds new ones awfully scarce.

The Musketeers said nothing of the incident, and

lorded it over the campus in their usual jaunty style. Dick never referred to our trip, but I seemed to notice, when we met, a certain coldness. Perhaps he sensed my disapproval, for I'm a poor hand to dissemble.

The first basketball practice was called for November 4, in late afternoon. I decided to attend it, just to see things get under way.

It was a noisy, jostling crowd of sixty that assembled in the gym to get their opening instructions. Excitement was intense—a new coach, and the opening of what was slated to be Sheriton's greatest year on the court.

As the hour bell clanged four, Spike Atwell strode through the door, and the room hushed swiftly. The coach, imperturbable as ever, stood with one hand on the desk. As his eyes swept the room a frown seemed to flicker across his forehead. It was momentary, but it set me to glancing about. And something within me froze.

No one of the Musketeers had come.

Quietly the coach began to speak. He pointed out, first, the dangers of underestimating our opponents. He designated the practice periods, outlined a few simple training rules. He announced that within a few weeks he would cut the varsity squad to the bone, but that the reserves would continue to turn out, and would have a schedule of games arranged for them.

At ten minutes after the hour we heard a scuffling and loud talking outside. The noise grew louder and the door swung open. Led by Dick, whose leather heels clumped loudly on the cement floor, the Musketeers made their self-conscious way to seats on the outskirts of the meeting.

Spike stopped talking and waited until they had settled themselves.

"This practice," he said, in a low tone that had a bite in it, "began at four o'clock."

So quickly that it seemed as though he had expected a reproach, Dick Lucas spoke up.

"Seniors at Sheriton," he said, "are accustomed to special privileges."

Somebody gasped. Every eye was on Spike's face. It seemed a deliberate challenge. Would the new coach rise to it?

For a long moment four eyes—Spike's deep blue ones and Dick's defiant brown ones—dulled with each other. Then Spike, as though nothing had happened, resumed his talk and presently dismissed the squad.

Few words were exchanged as the boys left the room—there was none of the milling and the joshing that was so conspicuous when they had assembled. There seemed to be a general uneasiness—a let-down feeling. Nobody exactly thought that Spike had shown the white feather, but still—

It was a matter for time to settle.

I watched one of the early-season scrimmages—varying against the scrubs. The story of that scrimmage was the story of the Musketeers. They were stars of the first magnitude, right enough, and beside them the reserves twinkled only palely.

At the whistle Healy, long as a telephone pole and as pliable as an eel, would bound high in the air, preempt the ball, and flick it sideways to Graham. Graham would not like a scared rabbit and whip a diagonal pass to

Dick. Then Dick, graceful as a swan, would arch the ball through the basket.

It seemed useless for the frantic scrubs to try to trap them, because Dick had a habit of cutting back, taking Healy's tip pass, and either firing it right back to Healy, or else shooting it to Graham. And Graham knew the shortest way to the basket, too.

Time after time Spike would halt the play.

"This is a five-man team," he would say, savagely. "Three-men teams are fine in practice, but they aren't so good against other five-men teams. Use your guards."

And then the Three Musketeers would look covertly at each other, and if there was a chance, wink broadly. And the next play would be a repetition—somehow a Musketeer always got the ball, and somehow another Musketeer was always ready to receive it.

It was tough on Spike, because after all you can't make a very convincing holler against a winning combination. As long as the Musketeers could keep pouring that ball through the basket, what could he say?

He'd get peeved, and rightly, at the way the Musketeers would play the long shot game—baskets from the middle of the floor, and all that. But he might as well have saved his breath, because in the heat of scrimmage the Musketeers would revert to their old habits. They were scoring habits one had to admit.

But Spike didn't give up easily.

"If you can't play a short pass game," he announced, "we'll put in some men who can. Healy, Lucas and Graham, out of the game. Caldwell at center—Weiss and Sullivan at forwards."

The three new men, their faces grim with determina-

on, rushed in. A whistle, and the tip off. But Caldwell rose in the air only to find that Hankinson, scrub center, was a tenth of a second ahead of him. Hankinson flipped the ball back over his head to Perkins, scrub guard, Perkins dribbled past Weiss, bounce passed to his own forward, and the jubilant scrubs had their first basket in seven minutes.

A low snicker from the side lines. Atwell whirled, quick as a flash, to find each of the Musketeers gazing, poker-faced, directly ahead of him.

It was a tough situation—tough on Atwell, and tough on the three men who were Sheriton's best substitutes for the Musketeers.

"I'd like to wring their blooming necks," I grated, to myself, as I left the gym.

That's the way affairs went along, except when the Musketeers would vote themselves a holiday. For prima donnas believe they have a right to temperament, and the Sublime Three were no exception. Sometimes they could get careless—meander through a half hour with only two or three baskets. At such times, too, they would put up a lackluster defense, and let their two guards fight heroically to defend the home goal. Yet changing the combination was even worse, for the Musketeers could always tighten, in a pinch, in a way their substitutes couldn't.

Poor Spike walked the streets all night, before the refer game. It was tragedy for him, the way the season was developing, yet his hands were tied. And worst of all, you heard nothing else, on the campus, but pæans of praise for the Musketeers. You'd have thought the conference championship had already been

engraved on cloth of gold, wrapped in purple ribbon and handed to the Sheriton varsity.

The whole school turned out to see the Purple and the Gold whip Kiefer. It was a pipe game, of course—Berkeley, a little later, would be rough, and so would our arch opponents, Ashford.

My varsity sweater got me into the locker room, and as usual my blood ran high as challengingly beyond the closed doors I could hear the lilt of "Bow Down to Sheriton." Before me jaunty purple jerseys were sliding over muscled shoulders, and white trunks, with a narrow purple stripe down them, were encasing supple legs.

Then the door flung open, the lights of the gym blazed through it, and seven thousand lusty voices roared their welcome as the varsity, led by Captain Dick, shot out in single file and began firing the ball to each other.

There were separate cheers for the Musketeers, and further cheers, as an afterthought, for the two guards and for Coach Atwell.

Kiefer warmed up snappily, too, but they scared nobody. It's worth four baskets to play on your home court, and Sheriton was another half dozen baskets better, on any court.

The big parade started with the whistle. The Musketeers put the ball through the basket three times before the dazed Kiefer captain could call for time and implore his desperate team mates to stop the slaughter. They stopped it for just two minutes—the time the referee gave them to think it over.

Healy to Graham to Lucas. Bing! Two points!

That, in a nutshell, was the Sheriton-Kiefer game. The half ended with the score 24 to 4. And throughout the yells were not for Sheriton, but for the Mighty Three. Spike's face was cloudy as he followed his team to the locker room.

In the first five minutes of the second half the varsity scored six baskets. Then Lucas, amid a thunderous roar, trotted to the side lines.

"What in Christopher's wrong?" shouted Red Barrett in my ear. "Coach didn't call him off."

Sullivan went into the game at once, and a white-faced Atwell followed Dick to the showers. We heard the rest of the story the next day, from the caretaker of the locker room.

"What's the big idea?" Spike demanded of Dick.

Dick looked up—his brown eyes stubborn as steel.

"Got tired," he said, and in spite of his attempt to be unconcerned, his voice wavered a little, "I shot you seven baskets. Didn't I do my share?"

The surging fury in the big coach's face, however, made even the son of Killer Lucas fall back a pace, and although Atwell had spoken no word he said uncertainly:

"It's only a practice game."

"So you took yourself out, did you?" Atwell blazed. "Thought you'd quit for half an hour? Well, make it a week. Don't bother to show up on Monday."

Over the week end the campus hummed with the news. Dick Lucas, varsity captain, star of the conference, son of Killer Lucas, canned for a week. Good for coach. Or, down with the coach. It depended on whom you were talking to.

On Monday morning Spike entertained two red-faced, blustering Musketeers. They demanded, loudly, the reinstatement of Dick that very afternoon.

"I appreciate your advice," Spike told them quietly. "But it happens to be my job to do my best for Sheriton, in the best way I know how. I've done it, and I see no reason to change my mind. That's all, gentlemen." And it was.

The next act in the drama was equally cataclysmic. That night at four not a single member of the Musketeers was in his place. Nor at four-thirty. Nor at five.

And the following Monday, ditto. The Musketeers were out on strike!

If the rebellious three expected Atwell to act worried, or to seek them out, they were sadly disappointed. The first week he left the varsity as it was, with substitutes playing for the Musketeers.

The second Monday, however, he made a brief announcement.

"It is obvious," he told his team, "that the conference championship everybody has been counting on is going to be won by someone else. Probably by the team we're all eager above all to beat. I refer to Ashford.

"I'll be surprised if we take half our games. We're desperately crippled, and we can't build a bunch of winners in a single year. What's more, I don't intend to try.

"In fact, I'm going to treat this whole schedule as a pre-season one—I'm going to use it to prepare for next year.

"Robinson here is the logical substitute for Healy at center. But Robinson is a senior, so I'm going to use

aldwell. He's the right build, though he's awkward, but by next year he ought to have developed some form. Robinson will play enough to earn his letter, of course, provided he stays on his toes."

And so he continued. Some of the names he mentioned made everybody gasp, for there were better players on the squad. It wasn't easy to get used to the idea of deliberately forgetting the present season—of deliberately conceding this year's series to Ashford, on the chance of beating her next. The campus, which on account of the Musketeers had its face set for one victory after another, yowled like a wounded lion.

Atwell's stock hit bottom with a thump. Some blamed him for the defection of the Musketeers, some for what they called "quitting cold," some for giving his time to green sophomores when more experienced seniors might win for him. For one reason or another, Atwell's name, in a whole lot of quarters, became as poison ivy. Atwell himself didn't seem to notice the tide of criticism. Except that he got thinner in the face, and sometimes, mornings, his eyes would have that glazed look that comes from lying in bed but not sleeping. Still, he said nothing. I ached with sympathy for him.

I met him one day—the Monday after Jennett had humiliated us, 38 to 17—and strolled down to the gym with him. We talked everything but basketball. As we climbed the stairs we passed a trim figure in jaunty togs—a trim figure who managed not to see us.

"Dick Lucas!" I gasped. "Is he back on the squad?"

"No," said Spike, shortly. "He's playing on the junior class team. And so are Graham and Healy."

The Three Musketeers on a class team! Finishing

their college career on a minor quintet. What was the big idea? All too soon I was to find out.

The varsity didn't get much better. And Atwell didn't seem to mind. Simply, he asked for speed, for every man to give his best all the time. He hammered away at fundamentals. His attack was a fast short pass game, with nobody shooting until the ball had been carried right under the enemy basket. It was the very antithesis of the Three Musketeers' offense, with its spectacular dribbles, passes that soared over half the floor, and looping tosses from every angle of the court.

Our foreign tour was a dismal failure—we captured just one game in six. And when, on the second half of our home schedule, Berkeley took our scalps by a score of 41 to 10, the discontent was loud and lasting. In line with his policy, Atwell was making frequent changes in his team—the five he started against Berkeley were entirely unfamiliar, except for Sullivan at forward, to the Sheriton stands. And Atwell's silence, his refusal to answer attacks, didn't help his popularity any.

Dick Lucas posed as an uncomplaining martyr, but actually he lost no opportunity to knife Atwell. And under his leadership the senior quintet walloped its class rivals by unprecedented scores. It was Dick, though he wouldn't admit it, who started the suggestion that the seniors take on the rest of the varsity schedule. That suggestion swept the campus like fire in dry grass, and I believe in a referendum it would have got a majority vote. That's how bitter everybody was at the loss of what had been figured a cinch championship.

One afternoon the Sheriton *Daily* printed a challenge. The challenger was the senior basketball team,

rough Dick Lucas, captain. The challenged was the Sheriton varsity. The message was curt. It simply pointed out that the final game with Ashford took place on Friday, March 7, that that was alumni homecoming, and that an exhibition game on Saturday night, between the varsity and the seniors, would round out the program beautifully.

The campus took to the proposal with delight. There was much genuine disappointment, and not a little anger, when Spike turned it down. The varsity was having a strenuous season, he said, and the Ashford game must end it. Of course, Dick couldn't have expected him to accept, and his presenting the challenge through the columns of *The Daily*, instead of by letter, must have been calculated to further discredit a man whom he had chosen to regard as an implacable enemy.

The final chapter was startling. In the same *Daily* that carried the story of our second loss to Jennett, was a terse statement from Killer Lucas that the alumni athletic committee had decided to request the varsity to play the seniors as a feature of homecoming. "A novel event," the statement said, that would "greatly interest the old graduates."

Red Barrett brought me *The Daily*.

"If I were Spike," he burst out, "I'd quit, this minute."

"No you wouldn't," I contradicted. "Spike mustn't do anything that resembles backing down under fire, especially since he needs to make good on his first job. Besides, he's frankly building for next year. Some of these chaps who are getting their varsity training now are likely to come back like whirlwinds next year."

That's the way one of Spike's Cornell teams got its start."

"I suppose you're right," agreed Red, thoughtfully. "If he wins next year, all the knockers will be praising him. But Dick Lucas hasn't won any gold medals in this affair, so far as I'm concerned. I'll be glad when he graduates."

Spike accepted the alumni committee's ultimatum without comment, except to say that they were in control of policy and he could of course obey their instructions. So, with Sheriton standing a bad seventh in the conference standing, everybody forgot the remaining two games and watched for the battle with the seniors.

"I hope Spike forgets his sophomores in that senior fracas, and plays Robinson and the rest of the seniors," said Red to me. "I'd rather see him beat the Musketeers than all the rest of the conference put together."

But Spike had his own ideas about that. He was building for next year, and this year didn't count. He kept right on experimenting—indeed, it became evident that at least two new faces would be in the Sheriton lineup for the senior struggle.

It wasn't until Red and I actually took our seats in the gym, that final night of homecoming, that we realized what a bizarre situation it was. The varsity playing the senior class! Usually the class teams were duds—nobody good enough on them to even shine the shoes of the varsity squad. Class teams were irregular in practice—sometimes they didn't practice at all. Why, they didn't even have a decent set of uniforms.

It seemed mighty funny to the alumni, too. We sat in the middle of them, and they could talk of nothing

else. We heard growls, too, about the varsity's poor showing, for nobody could forget that Atwell had started with a team of stars.

I won't tell you about the game—it's a painful subject. In the first place, the seniors got a tremendous hand—a bigger hand than the varsity. In the second place, the Three Musketeers ran wild. They made the varsity look as slow as a dying glacier, and their long-pass, long-shot game far outshone the quieter tactics of Atwell's green recruits.

Several times during that painful game I looked at Atwell—he was impassive. He continued his experimenting—he used not less than twelve players. And Robinson didn't get in—Atwell gave the practice to underclassmen.

It was a good game, anyhow, and there are worse defeats than 38 to 24. But I felt pretty badly as I crowded my way out of the gym.

The next blow fell swiftly. *The Daily* announced a special meeting of the alumni athletic committee for the following Monday, at which Killer Lucas would preside. "Coach Atwell," the story ran, "has been notified to attend."

A special meeting, at an unheard-of time. And Coach Atwell "notified" to attend. Not invited, or requested, but *notified*. It sounded mighty bad.

Students are allowed to go to meetings of the alumni athletic committee. I resolved to attend.

I found a wrathful Red Barrett waiting in my room. He launched into a tirade against Killer and Dick and all absentee alumni who try to run things from swivel chairs a hundred miles away.

"Let's attend that meeting together," I said. "Let's show Spike that a few of us are back of him, anyhow."

On our way to it, that Monday evening, we fell in with the big coach. He was tired—weariness showed in his walk. And while his voice was as calm and level as ever, the old electricity seemed gone from it.

"Coming to the execution?" he asked, in a voice that somehow wasn't so light as he meant it to be.

"Execution, raspberries!" sputtered Red. "Even a dumb alumni committee will have sense enough to know when it's well off."

"Thanks, Barrett."

We left Spike at the door of Commerce Hall.

The committee room was jammed with students and reporters—the door had to be left open for the lookers-on who crowded into the hallway. At seven the Killer, lean, tall, hawk-faced, with sharp eyes that roved restlessly and regally about the room, took his place at the chairman's table.

"This meeting," he announced, abruptly, "has been called to make public the deliberations and decisions of the alumni athletic committee, which met in executive session over the week end."

He ran skinny fingers through thin white hair, and resumed:

"While victory isn't the sole object of intercollegiate athletics"—"It is to *you*," muttered Red, so loudly that I pinched his arm—"still we should strive to win in sports just as we strive to win in the outside world."

I stole a look at Spike. He was sitting sideways in his chair, legs crossed, toying with a pencil. His eyes rested quietly on Killer, and his expression was quite serene.

Not so with Dick Lucas, however. Dick sat near the wall, two rows behind him, and fidgeted and squirmed with uneasiness.

"He's got a pain in the conscience," Red whispered. "I'd wiggle too, if I were he."

"This year we have all been disappointed. We started with perhaps the greatest trio of stars this conference has ever known"—some desultory hand clapping—"but for what seemed to them good reasons those Three Musketeers felt obliged to resign from the squad.

"We had also this year a new coach—a coach of brilliant record on the courts, but without experience in handling men. I am not here to pass judgment on his work—the alumni committee does not wish to be understood as condemning it.

"We do feel, however, that next year our basketball squad should be under a different tutelage. The committee has decided, without my advice or suggestion, to offer the post of varsity coach to a man who has done a great deal for Sheriton basketball—it gives me some embarrassment to name him, for he happens to be my son."

Gasps. Audible whisperings. A shifting of chairs. Only Spike, a tiny smile threatening his mouth, sat unmoved.

"As I said," the Killer went on in his dry voice, "our decision must not be taken as a condemnation of Mr. Atwell. We like him"—"like blazes, you do," from the indignant Red—"and we want him with us. We offer him the post of intramural coach, in charge of baseball and basketball. His salary will be increased by \$200."

Intramural coach! In charge of the rank and file

of students, the fellows who didn't aspire to enter competition. I looked at Spike—so did everybody else, including Dick. Spike rose deliberately to his feet.

"Thank you, gentlemen," he said. "I suppose our program must have been a great surprise to many—which of course doesn't indicate that it was in error. When we lost our stars it became evident to me that we were in for some lost basketball games—therefore I decided to lose no time weeping about this year's chances, but to set the stage as attractively as possible for next. The fact that we didn't win, this year, even from the seniors, proves nothing. However, I don't want to be in the position of giving approval to my work, nor am I interested on the other hand in defending it.

"Some of you expect me to resign, right here and now. Perhaps I should."

Spike paused. I stopped breathing, and so did everybody else. The room seemed frozen.

Then Spike's calm voice again :

"I shall accept the committee's kind offer. Perhaps I can develop some good men for the varsity."

With that, and smiling, he walked out. A few minutes later a silent, thoughtful group of students and reporters followed him.

College days pass before you know it, and fall came rapidly. I was pretty busy with varsity baseball, and didn't get to see Spike as often as I wished to. He moved serenely along, so far as I could see, working tirelessly and not making any noise about it. For his baseball season he organized the fraternities and clubs, and held an elimination tournament that was a raring, tearing blinger. Twice as many played baseball as ever before.

at Sheriton, and Spike laid out an attractive program that seemed bound to get the same good results for basketball.

Meanwhile Dick Lucas graduated, and set himself for the pleasant prospect of a championship year in varsity basketball. At least he did a lot of talking, talking which contained not the slightest tinge of pessimism. Evidently a Lucas coached team, in Dick's opinion, couldn't lose. Dick, in Spike's presence, maintained his chilly reserve. But Spike, instead of showing a resentment, which he had every right in the world to feel, treated Dick with the quiet friendliness which was so much a part of him.

That was the way things stood when November rolled around, and Dick posted his initial call for basketball candidates. Again, taking advantage of the privilege that Sheriton grants to varsity letter men, I attended.

Dick took charge with all the confidence in the world. He fairly oozed it.

"Seventy men," he appraised, as his eye ran swiftly over the flushed, eager throng of candidates. Half as many would do me.

"You all know how things went haywire this last year. We'll do better, this. We've got to. We need to win fourteen games if we cop the conference title—I'm all for winning all eighteen of them. Under any circumstances, we've got to sink Ashford—sink her so deep that a thousand men can't raise her."

We yelled blue murder. Just mention Ashford to any Sheriton man, and he'll either die of apoplexy or else

shout out a war cry. That's the way we feel about that school.

Dick must have taken the uproar as a personal tribute, for he smirked delightedly.

"Thanks, boys," he said. "I'm not going to say anything about our plans, except that Lucas teams play no favorites. Everybody has got to fight like sixty. Also those of you who got in the habit of taking things easily last year—"rotten sportsmanship," I thought to myself—"had better snap out of it, double quick. This year's squad is going to *work*."

"I'll prove that to you to-night. I want every man to circle the running track twenty-six times—two miles Snappy, and finish with a sprint. And at four to-morrow you'll show up for suits. Don't plan on dinner before six-thirty, from now on, because that's the quickest you'll get out."

I don't know a lot about basketball, so I decided, just for fun, to teach myself a little about it. I was still sore over the way Spike had been treated, and I was also interested to see whether Dick could justify the talking he'd been doing. So I began to show up at the gym, after noons, to educate myself.

Dick's first turnout was a scorcher. Two hours and a quarter of the hardest kind of work. He even staged a half hour scrimmage, using as varsity some of the men—Weiss and Caldwell and Sullivan—whom Spike had concentrated on, the year before. The boys were willing and eager, but when, at the end of that man-killing session, Dick called for the tour on the track, there were some groans, and not a little rebellion.

I have played varsity football, and sometimes it ha

just seemed impossible to drag myself off the field, but even to me this program looked pretty strenuous. But Dick was the coach, and ought to know what a man could stand.

The opening game with Kiefer Institute we won, by a score of 31-24. That isn't too creditable, for Kiefer only stays in the conference because the big teams like soft spots on their schedule. Sheriton kept the upper hand all through, but she didn't play smooth basketball. Uncertainty. That was the trouble. Men getting the ball, and not knowing just what to do with it. You've seen teams like that. They pause for a split second, and in that time the defense forms and there's no place to unload the ball.

Moreover, while the team was giving everything, there wasn't any dash, any sparkle, to them. They had an "all in the day's work" attitude; it didn't seem to be *fun*. But the first game isn't the season. Give Dick a chance.

When we barely nosed out Jennett in an overtime period, however, Dick looked disturbed. Jennett was far from hot—indeed, a cracking good high school team might have beaten Jennett that season. Again the varsity was uncertain—again it just seemed, when the play got lightning fast, a bit bewildered. That would never do against Berkeley, or the green and white demons from Ashford.

The next evening found me in Spike's rooms.

"What's wrong with the varsity?" I blurted out.

"Why do you ask *me*?" Spike's tone was quizzical.

"Because I want to see us win, whether or not the reigning coach happens to be a fathead."

Spike looked at me searchingly, but his face was inscrutable.

"You're hard on a man who's just starting out."

My impulse was to point out that Dick Lucas deserved that thrust far more than I did, but I checked it.

"I'll admit that, Spike. But I want Sheriton to have a good season. Particularly, to trim Ashford. You're around the gym all the time. What's wrong with the team?"

There was a crackling fire in the grate, and Spike gazed into it for at least five minutes. Several times he started to speak, but didn't. Finally:

"What good will my suggestions do?"

"I thought," I answered, "that maybe I could pass along a tip or two to Dick."

Another long silence. Then: "Okay, if you don't tell the source of it.

"For one thing, the squad is working too hard. Everybody is dead on his feet. Basketball is a tough game—fighting spirit and fatigue can't exist side by side on the same team.

"For another, Dick is trying to duplicate a type of attack that only the Three Musketeers can get away with. He has light, fairly fast men—he should use a short pass, fast breaking game, with everybody knowing fundamentals so well that his actions in a tight jam are instinctive."

That, I thought to myself, was the fault with Sheriton in the Kiefer and Jennett games.

"Also," the big coach went on reflectively, "there is too much Dick Lucas on the floor."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just what I said. Watch a practice. You'll see, half the time, only two balls. Two balls aren't enough for a big squad. Dick ties up the whole turnout while he's talking to one or two. Also, Dick tries to play himself, tries to demonstrate what's right and what isn't. He isn't good enough for that. No coach is. Unless you're in tiptop playing trim yourself you shouldn't even put on a suit. Dick isn't in tiptop playing trim. No coach is likely to be. He has too many more important jobs to tend to."

I remembered how, two afternoons before, Dick had tried to show how to dribble past a guard. Watkins, slow and flatfooted, was picked as victim. But Watkins took a firm two-footed grip on the floor, ready to shift his long arms, and broke up Dick's dribble so completely that Dick even lost the ball. There were plenty of covert winks, after *that* exhibition.

"I see," I said.

"That's about all," said Spike. "All that I'd tell Dick, anyway. And be careful how you do it."

We chatted for a half hour before I rose to go.

The next morning I met Dick.

"What do you think of your team, Flip?" he asked. I pitied him then, for red spots glowed in his cheeks, and his hands twitched nervously.

"I don't know what to think," I stalled.

"I know what *I* think," Dick flashed. "I think we're lousy."

That gave me my cue, and I made a couple of quiet suggestions. How could I know I was fooling with dynamite? All at once Dick blew higher than a kite.

"That's Spike Atwell's line," he shouted. "Didn't

I hear it, the whole silly drivel, last year? And what did we get? A nice soft berth in the cellar! Stick to football, big boy. When I want your advice, I'll ask for it."

"Don't go away mad, Dick," I said, as calmly as I could. "I only—"

Dick was a dozen feet away.

Early that afternoon I happened by the gym, and called on Spike's office.

"Something wrong?" he asked, reading my face.

"I'm not sure."

But if I wasn't then, I was a moment later, for the door flung open and a blazing Dick Lucas entered. He covered the space to Spike's desk in two long steps.

"You keep your hands off my team," he roared.

Spike looked at his hands good-humoredly.

"They haven't been fooling with your team," he said, holding them up as if to prove it.

"Oh, haven't they?" Dick spit out. "Your puppet here,"—he thrust a contemptuous finger at me—"cornered me this morning, and tried to fill me with the kind of poison that ruined the varsity last year."

Spike got deliberately to his feet and came around the corner of his desk.

"Lower your voice, youngster," he said. "This is a gentleman's office."

"The office of a gentleman who had to be canned," Dick shouted.

Spike's left hand grasped Dick's collar and swung him around. The other took a firm grip on the seat of Dick's trousers. Then he lifted Dick, apparently with-

out effort, carried him, kicking and struggling like a roped cougar, to the door. I followed, to see Dick flattened, not too gently, on the floor of the hall.

But what pried my jaw open, left me cold as ice, and trembling, was another sight. For Killer Lucas, surprise written all over his face, stood speechless at the head of the stairs.

Spike nodded to him, turned back, and closed the door.

In a few words I told Spike how I'd met Dick—that while I'd been perfectly cautious he'd jumped at conclusions. Then I rushed out, intent on repairing the rest of the damage.

On the path at the north end of the campus I overtook the Killer, walking alone.

"Mr. Lucas," I called. He turned, his sharp eyes questioning.

"Mr. Lucas, I happened to be in on that little tussle you saw. Let me explain it to you."

"Why should you explain it to me, young man?" The Killer's voice was dry as powdered snow.

"Because I don't want you to get a wrong idea of Spike."

The Killer stared at me, and then, miraculously, he smiled.

"You don't need to, son. I like a fighter."

He left me dazed and nonplused.

Berkeley trimmed us, two straight. Jennett split a series with us. We lost other games. Weeks were passing—unpleasant weeks.

The squad, weighted down by campus disappoint-

ment, got worse. Its play was mechanical, its headwork a thing to wonder at. It was lackluster—slow to get going—in and out.

Dick lost his self-assurance, became a worried, harassed boy who didn't know what to do. His front deserted him—clearly he had met a situation he could not cope with.

Luck had shown me the opening stages of the drama, and luck let me see the unwinding of it. I called on Spike at his rooming place, and as usual opened the downstairs door without knocking. Spike lives on the second floor.

Voices, low but vibrant, halted me.

"I'll do anything I can," Spike was saying. "Name it."

"Come and coach." It was Dick's voice, full of misery. "Let me fit in anywhere, but you're the boss. I realize now how I wrecked everything, last year. Help us make a decent showing against Ashford, and I'll feel as if this season hasn't gone completely to pot."

"Sure," Spike's deep voice reassured him. "I'll start to-morrow."

I backed out and went hastily away.

Spike himself saw to the announcement in *The Daily*—it simply read that Dick Lucas had appointed Glenn Atwell assistant varsity coach for the balance of the season. Decent? I'll say! Especially when Dick had surrendered to Spike complete authority.

Spike's first act was to dismiss the varsity squad for three days.

"I don't want to spot a one of you around the gym until next Monday," he warned. "Forget basketball.

Bury it dead. Take it easy. Put your mind on other things. Let the second half of our schedule take care of itself. I'll have more to say next week."

"They're stale," he explained to me, confidentially, later. "All of 'em under weight, which is a sign they've been overworked. They haven't much enthusiasm, either—another sure sign. Our first job is to get this bunch back into a winning frame of mind."

There was more pep in the bunch when they showed up on Monday. Even then Spike didn't work 'em hard. He simply had a short chalk talk and preached the everlasting gospel of speed, a short pass driven right up to the basket, and an accuracy that would make every man dangerous. No scrimmage, just some exercises in tip passing, and the old game of everybody revolving in a circle under the basket, shooting, recovering and shoving the ball to the man behind you so he can take his turn.

"Every man make sure the trainer gets his weight," he said when he dismissed everybody a half hour later.

"Looks better," Spike exclaimed with satisfaction as he compared the latest set of weights with weights that had previously been recorded on the chart. "Everybody has gained—some as much as four pounds. Another week and we will have this gang in full stride."

Spike made no changes in the varsity—they were men he'd been developing the previous year. But he sternly checked all attempts at long, spectacular passes, or at floor-length dribbles that usually ended with a tossed up ball. Sheriton's game was to break swiftly, with a man or two uncovered at all times and ready to receive the ball. Hafey and Sherman, the two guards

whom Spike hadn't drilled especially in basket shooting, were Spike's particular pupils. He kept them shooting from all angles and speeds, at every possible opportunity.

The team faced Morton, a non-conference team, with unusual confidence. Morton took a four-point lead and held it a few minutes, but at the half she was down a dozen points, and we finally won by a score of 47-22.

"The big thing about this game," Spike exulted afterward, "is that we played the last ten minutes of it at top speed. No jaded, shopworn team can do that. The boys are getting back into condition."

They'd need to be in condition, with Ashford running roughshod over the rest of the conference.

The Monday after the Morton game Spike refused to allow any sort of scrimmage. He just chalk-talked, and pointed out weaknesses. The finish of the session was more practice in passing—bounce, shoulder, and tip variety. There was sparkle in the way the boys ran through it—Sheriton was taking on class. And the happiest one in the bunch seemed to be Dick. Sheriton's showing was delighting him. He did his share with a lot of pepper, but he was careful not to get in Spike's way. Spike, I was tickled to notice, gave him orders just like anybody else—either Spike was running things or he wasn't. There was nothing halfway about him.

As passing and shooting became second nature to the Sheriton squad, Spike introduced some plays from tip-off, all involving speed, shiftiness, and short quick passes until the ball was dangerously close to the basket. He left nothing to chance—nothing to the Lady Luck who

delights to tamper with the shot that starts from a long way off.

We didn't come out so well with Ashford in our home series. She won the first 31-18—just waltzed right through us. The second game we pulled out of on the right end of the score, 26-24, but Ashford went haywire the last half and just couldn't get her eye on the basket. Good teams falter that way, now and then. But the prospect of the return series, on the Ashford floor, didn't exactly set anybody to singing the Doxology.

Our stock went up, however, when we invaded Whitman and Berkeley and took a pair of games from each. That was bringing down big game, and the newspapers began treating us with more respect.

We won our next two games, also. Then were to come mid-quarter exams, and the final series with Ashford.

That Ashford series was the bugbear that had us all seeing things at night. Ashfordites were fond of saying that Sheriton last year had *three* Musketeers, but that this year Ashford had *five*. And they weren't far wrong, for they were as beautiful a combination of height and speed and brawn as I've ever seen.

Spike, serene in the knowledge that his boys were back at fighting edge, tightened up on practice. He devised new drills that would send combinations of twos and threes and fours driving down the floor, with the ball weaving between them. He taught them bounce pass plays from the side lines, variations of their tip-off formations, other tricks that go to make a finished team. And he kept coming back to each so often that it became second nature to each man—if basketball isn't

instinctive, he was fond of saying, it isn't basketball.

He simply overlooked nothing that might lead to an extra point. For instance, there was his formation for shooting fouls. He picked Weiss and Hafey, our two tallest men, and stood them at the junction of the free throw and end lines, right under the basket. His idea was that in case the foul shooter missed, a tall man had the best chance of slapping the ball back into the basket. And Hafey and Weiss proved he was right.

Next he introduced a variation of this play. He taught the foul shooter, the moment the ball left his hand, to dart to his right, behind Hafey. Then if he'd missed the basket, and the ball dropped on Hafey's side, Hafey would flip it back over his shoulder, and the foul shooter would grab it and let fly for the basket. It was a spectacular stunt, and often it so surprised the enemy that we'd get an unhurried shot, and two points instead of only one.

I was one of four hundred Sheriton students that crowded the special train, Ashford bound. Two victories would give us second place in the conference, dizzy heights of which we hadn't dreamed, two months before. There was a fighting chance the varsity would come through, too. At any rate, we knew there was nothing wrong with 'em—that under any circumstances they'd make us proud.

Saturday night's game we took, before crowds that simply went crazy with excitement. First one team topped the other, then vice versa. The ultimate score was 32-29. Which put it all up to the final. Another victory would nose out Berkeley, and put us where we wanted to be.

Everybody in Ashford turned out to the Monday night game. Lucky we had our seats reserved. In the roar and confusion of the warming up I sneaked over and sat on the floor at the foot of the players' bench, right by Spike. It wasn't strictly according to Hoyle, but he gave no sign he saw me, and there I stayed.

We started that game like an unleashed whirlwind. It seemed as though all the energy we hadn't shown at the start of the season burst out in this final game. We shot three baskets before the bewildered Ashford captain could call for time out. At the minute the ball returned to play we shot another.

Our men slipped in and out of that stalwart Ashford defense like so many wasps. Always there seemed to be a man uncovered, and always our short passes sped true to the mark.

The Ashford stands were glum as a swamp, but our loyal four hundred made enough noise to fill the big gym.

Of course we didn't do all the scoring. Ashford knew basketball, too, and when they'd get the ball it was the devil's own job to recover it. They came closest to us at the end of ten minutes, with the score 11 to 7, but a beautiful short shot by the galloping Sullivan brought us up to thirteen, and we counted again on Weiss's foul. The half ended 19 to 9.

Do you recall how, against certain strong opponents, even a good lead won't keep fingers of ice from clutching the inside of you? All the time Sheriton was in the locker room I had to yell to keep up my courage. But when I saw those purple and gold boys out on the

floor again I felt better. Somehow they brought confidence back to me.

When Ashford scored two baskets in quick succession my spirits dropped to zero. But Sheriton came back with one and a foul. Then another. 24 to 13. What could be better than that?

The half went on in seesaw fashion, with Ashford, whose sharpshooters grew more deadly as the battle wore on, getting a little the best of the scrap.

Suddenly I noticed the yells from the Ashford bench were more vociferous. Four minutes to play. And the score 29-21 in favor of Sheriton.

A roar. Kenworthy of Ashford intercepts a pass meant for Sullivan. He makes a three-step dribble and bounces it to McLaughlin. McLaughlin feints to return it, pivots swiftly, and shoots it to Berch. Berch is right under the basket, and before the desperate Hafey can cover him the score is 29-23.

The tipoff. Ashford has it again. A shove, and the ball is down the floor before Sheriton offense can form. A scuffle of players, a whirling green and white body that shakes itself free and straightens, a swift chest shot, 29-25.

It's getting too close to be comfortable. We raise the roof with a thunderous "Go get 'em, Sheriton!"

But the next basket is Ashford's, too, and the score is 29-27. Sullivan calls for time, and both teams subside into little panting circles.

Spike's face is white—a corner of his lip is caught tightly between his teeth.

There's a little more than a minute left. The teams take positions for the tipoff. The whistle.

Ashford has it again, but this time Sheriton is ready with her defense. Kenworthy tries to dribble; Weiss breaks it up. The ball goes up between them. Kenworthy bats it to Berch and Berch loops it through the basket to knot the score.

Eight points in a row, and a tied score. Moreover, Sheriton is weakening. The pace is telling on us.

But we take a big brace, work the ball down the floor, and a swift chest shot by the desperate Sullivan sends it spinning toward the basket. Two plunks—one solid one as it smacks the backboard, and a shorter one as it bounds off the iron rim. A groan from Sheriton, that grows louder as the referee halts a tangle and calls a foul.

Ashford makes it. The score is 30-29 in favor of Ashford.

The next half minute is the hottest I've ever seen. The ball darts here and there as though it is too hot to hold. It stays near the center of the floor, however. Ashford is eager to hold it—perfectly willing to win by the slender margin of one point.

Sheriton's defense is the offensive kind—frantically they drive after the ball. They must make Ashford throw it, and intercept. Fifteen seconds left. A whistle—another foul. We hold our breath, then let out an ungodly roar as the referee taps McLaughlin on the back. Ashford's misplay—Sheriton gets a free shot.

There's a commotion behind me. Spike is sending in Peters of the scrubs. A roar of laughter from Ashford stands as he goes in, for he's a good six feet five, and just thick enough to keep himself from falling apart.

"What's the idea of sending in a third string man?" I yell at Spike.

"I hope Sullivan figures it out," Spike answers, and then wraps a coat around the panting Hafey, who has come off the floor.

I'll tell you now what I didn't know then. Spike figured that just as Sheriton had had her inning at the start of the game, so Ashford was having hers now. Ashford, for the moment, was the superior team. If the game ended in a tie, and the referee called for a five-minute overtime period, Ashford would surely win.

There, in the dozen seconds there were left, it was up to Sheriton to do more than *tie*—it was her one chance to *win*. And the only way she could do it was by her trick play, the play that Spike had taught the boys to use when they'd fail to shoot a basket. That was why he'd sent in the long-legged Peters, and if Sullivan, who was to shoot the foul, remembered, there was a chance.

The teams lined up—Sullivan at the foul mark, and the rest of the two teams close along the lane. Except that on the left corner of the lane and end line, right under the basket, stood Weiss, and on the right, big Peters, his face working with eagerness.

The ball soared high, and as it left his hand Sullivan shot to the right. There was a roar from Ashford as it missed the basket cleanly, struck the backboard and bounded toward the floor. But as Kenworthy of Ashford leaped for it a long skinny arm waved over him.

The ball flipped back over Peters' shoulder, squarely into the outstretched hands of Sullivan. And Sully, not fifteen feet from the basket, arched it cleanly in.

That's the way the game ended, 31-30, in favor of Sheriton.

All the way home we talked about it—the way Sullivan, by way of taking no chances, deliberately missed the basket entirely, so that Peters would surely have a chance to get the ball back to him.

It was Dick Lucas, at the next meeting of the alumni athletic committee, who proposed that Spike Atwell be reappointed head basketball coach. And it was Killer, after the unanimous vote in favor, who was first to shake hands with Atwell.

Which was as it should be, for hadn't the Killer told me he liked a fighter?

THE YALE AND PRINCETON QUARTERBACKS TALK IT OVER

DAN CAULKINS, TIGER, AND PHIL BUNNELI
BULLDOG, DISCUSS THE STRATEGY OF
THE FIFTIETH ANNUAL CLASH

BY FRANKLIN M. RECK

Here's the Situation

ON A COOL, gray day in November, 1926, 54,000 people gathered in the giant horseshoe of Palmer Memorial stadium to see Yale and Princeton engage in their fiftieth football battle.

From New York, Philadelphia and New Haven, and from nearly every town in New Jersey they came in special trains and autos, scooting past scenes that are rich in traditions of the Revolution and converging upon the town of Princeton, where General Washington defeated a regiment of British. Over the shaded campus past Nassau Hall, where once the Continental Congress met, they streamed, discussing the relative merits of the two teams that were to meet within the hour.

On the season's record, Princeton was the favorite, but over the half century of competition, Yale—with 26 victories and 9 ties against Princeton's 14 triumphs—had acquired a traditional superiority. Few would hazard a prediction. It was the old story of Bulldog

against Tiger, and statistics would mean little or nothing.

From the opening whistle to the final gun, the struggle was tense and wearing. Every few plays brought a new crisis. Fortunes changed with lightning-like swiftmess.

THE LINE-UP

<i>Princeton</i>		<i>Yale</i>
Lawler	L.E.	Scott
Darby	L.T.	Richards
Saldwin	L.G.	Sturhahn
Bartell	C.	Look, Harvey
Davis (C)	R.G.	Webster, Hitchcock
Rosengarten, French, Meislahn	R.T.	Benton
Moeser, Stinson	R.E.	Fishwick
Caulkins	Q.B.	Bunnell (C)
Caruch, Ewing, Williams	L.H.B.	Holabird, Goodwine, Noble
Bridges, Requardt,		Failing, Hoben,
Prendergast	R.H.B.	Brandenburg
Miles, Willauer	F.B.	Kline, Cox, Wadsworth

Before the first quarter was three minutes old, Yale was trying a dropkick from the Tiger 22-yard line. When the attempt failed—almost before Princeton had time to draw a relieved breath—the inspired Bulldog blocked a punt and took the ball on the Tiger 10-yard line. Here Yale's surprise play, a tricky double pass, went wrong and Princeton was again out of danger. In between Yale threats, Princeton demonstrated a puzzling forward pass attack that bewildered the Eli secondary defense.

Early in the second quarter an uninterrupted barrage of passes brought Quarterback Dan Caulkins of Princeton over the Yale goal for the first touchdown of the game. After the kickoff, another air attack took

Princeton to Yale's 25-yard line, where Baruch dropped and kicked for three more points.

In exactly six more plays, the Tiger was backed up to his own 3-yard line in possession of the ball. Here Dan Caulkins tried the most daring unorthodox play of the game—a forward pass from behind his own goal line. Hoben of Yale intercepted it, and in two more plays Eli had a touchdown. When the half was ended, Yale was again deep in Tiger territory, throwing passes that threatened to score.

During the third quarter, through the great running of Captain Phil Bunnell and Goodwine, Yale was constantly threatening the Princeton goal. Once, after Bunnell had placed the sphere on the Tiger 4-yard line with a dazzling run, a heart-breaking misplay from center ruined Yale's opportunity to go into the lead.

The fourth quarter witnessed Yale backed to her own 11-yard line and, a little later, Princeton on her own 10-yard line. At the very end of the game, Bunnell of Yale received a forward pass, twisted free of several tacklers and might have got away for a score if Dan Caulkins had not nailed him.

The story of how it all happened, especially of those tense moments when victory depended upon the choice of play, the two quarterbacks themselves will tell you in this article. The final score, if that is important, was Princeton 10, Yale 7.

The Characters

Dan Caulkins, Princeton quarterback. Five feet ten inches tall, weighing 158 pounds. Built like a race horse.

Smoothly combed black hair and black eyes. Of the nervously energetic, quick-thinking type. Humorous and impulsive. Tense.

Phil Bunnell, Yale quarterback. Shorter than Caulkins, but weighing exactly the same—158 pounds. Slightly broader shoulders and body, tapering down to a pair of sprinter's legs. Tortoise shell glasses under an unruly shock of blond hair. Thoughtful and soft-spoken. Relaxed.

Frank Reck: Staff writer for *THE AMERICAN BOY*, and an interested listener.

The Setting, and the Time

A hotel room in New York City, just three weeks after that 1926 Yale-Princeton game, which resulted in a 10-7 victory for the Tiger after a tense, thrill-packed contest.

(The two quarterbacks are discussing how they felt the night before the game.)

CAULKINS: "I went to bed about nine-thirty, and woke up at two with a toothache. Abscess, the dentist said. I was with the doctor until an hour before game time. Lord, I was nervous."

RECK: "Did you have a plan of attack? I've often wondered how much of a *plan* teams have before a game."

BUNNELL: "Yale had no 'set' plan. We intended to hit the line until we succeeded in drawing in the Princeton defense, and then pass or send Holabird around end. One scoring play we were counting on—a double pass."
(This is the play in which the halfback throws a short

forward pass to the end, and the end—just as he is about to be tackled—tosses the ball to a backfield man who is running outside and slightly behind him. The second pass, since it's thrown laterally, or slightly backward, doesn't have to be made back of the line of scrimmage. It can be made anywhere.)

RECK: "Then Yale's plan was mainly orthodox strategy and a surprise play, and Princeton—"

CAULKINS: "Princeton was planning to throw at least two forward passes out of every five plays. We intended to mix up passes and running plays all through the game—make the pass a constant threat. Some teams pass only in their opponent's territory, and then they find themselves unable to gain through the line. Usually they try it on the third down. Others use it when time is nearly up and they need a score badly. As a result, the opponent knows exactly what to expect. Princeton intended to use it on all parts of the field and at all times."

(And now for the game—fifty-four thousand rooters in the stands, on their feet and shouting. On the grid-iron, twenty-two jerseyed figures nervously clenching fists and lifting their feet. Princeton wins the toss and chooses to kick-off. There's no wind. Holabird of Yale receives the kick-off on the 10 and runs it back to the 28. Good work! Yale is now in position to start an attack, or to punt and assume the defensive.)

BUNNELL: "We tried one play at the two yards. Its purpose was chiefly to take the edge off our men—give them confidence."

CAULKINS: "Good idea. A team gets so keyed up

waiting for the start that it's almost impossible to play good football for the first couple minutes."

BUNNELL: "It was mostly for Holabird's benefit. He was playing his first varsity game—in place of Noble—and needed steadying. On the second down I sent Holabird back to punt."

RECK: "Why punt on your second down when you're on the 30?"

BUNNELL: "Dan was playing fairly close" (*Dan Caulkins playing defensive back for Princeton*) "and I hoped to get one over his head. If I succeeded there's no telling how far back the ball might roll."

(*Caulkins, however, refuses to be caught napping. He receives the punt and is downed on Princeton's 40. On the first play, he sends Bridges through the left side of the line for 5 yards. You notice one peculiar thing about the play. Before the ball is snapped, Caulkins starts running out to the right, and by the time Bridges has the ball, Dan is going wide around right end.*)

BUNNELL (*curiously*): "Just why did you run around right end on that play?"

CAULKINS: "I wanted to see if your defensive left half would follow me out. And then, with me running to the right like that, your men would naturally be watching me and wondering what was coming off. They wouldn't be quite so prepared for the line play."

BUNNELL: "It worked, all right. Our left half followed you all the way, and then wondered what it was all about. And the line was too busy watching you to get set for the play."

CAULKINS: "On the next play I took a pass over

center for 12 yards. That followed our plan of mixing up passes and runs all through the game."

RECK: "First down, in Yale's territory—quick work."

(Another play and a recovered fumble make it third down and 12 to go, on Yale's 40. Not so good.)

CAULKINS: "We needed a play that would get distance. We tried a reverse: Baruch to the right, and our fullback coming around and taking the ball to the left. Yale smeared it!"

RECK: "A reverse takes so long to execute—is it usually successful?"

CAULKINS: "You bet—when every man is doing his job—when the line checks just long enough, and every man fills his assignment. But we had another object, and that was to 'set up' a triple pass for later use. The triple pass starts out just like the reverse, with a third man taking the ball to the right. That's the play that scored a touchdown against Harvard."

(On the next play, Princeton punts over the Yale goal line. The Blue tries two line plays from its own 20, then punts. At this point comes the first break of the game. Just as Caulkins receives the punt he is tackled hard. The ball rolls from his hands and is recovered by Sturhahn of Yale on the Tiger 43. Here is Yale's first glowing opportunity to launch an attack. Bunnell calls for a line play, which is stopped without gain. Then comes a forward pass, Holabird to Bunnell, that gains 8 yards. Third down and 2 to go! What would you do next?)

BUNNELL: "I called for a forward pass. Dan knocked it down."

RECK (*doubtfully*): "A forward pass, with only 2 yards to go, and two more downs? I should think you'd have tried a line play."

CAULKINS: "Princeton thought so too. In fact we all expected a line play and that's why I think Phil showed good judgment. It was just by luck that I knocked it down."

(*Now Yale's situation is more ticklish than ever. Fourth down and 2 to go! And the ball on Princeton's 35!*)

BUNNELL: "I decided to send Failing straight through the middle of the line for first down."

(*No strategy here! The moment Yale lines up, Princeton knows what is coming, and digs in to meet it. Force against force! And Yale makes it first down on the Tiger 30. Scoring territory now. What's the next move—and why?*)

BUNNELL: "I called for a forward pass. I had just used a line play and the Princeton defense was drawn in. One of our passes had failed, and I felt certain that Princeton didn't expect another."

RECK: "What happened?"

BUNNELL: "I caught the pass—had a clear field ahead—and slipped."

CAULKINS: "My heart was in my mouth when you caught it! I certainly thought Providence was with us when you fell! Wet field."

BUNNELL: "The pass gained four yards and left us on the right side of the field. My next play was for position—Holabird to the left. He made about a yard."

RECK: "That makes it third down and 5 to go on Princeton's 25."

BUNNELL: "Yes—and Princeton's line was holding.

But I thought it would be better to send the next play straight through the line rather than risk getting out of position for a possible dropkick on the fourth down. The line play didn't gain. On the last down I dropkicked—and missed."

(The ball goes to Princeton on her 20.)

CAULKINS: "My first play was Baruch through the line. Baruch, of course, is our passer, and I wanted to get him to run."

RECK: "Baruch isn't strong on running?"

CAULKINS: "Not very. But I figured that if we could get him away for a gain or two, we'd have Yale guessing when I wanted to use him for a pass. He made about 2 yards on this play. On the next down I made about 3 yards on a forward pass from Baruch."

RECK: "Passing on your own 22?"

CAULKINS: "If you have a good passer—I think it's all right. I don't look on the pass as a highly dangerous play—one to be avoided except in emergencies, or deep in your opponent's territory. There's little danger of it being intercepted if your passer keeps his head. And to make it effective, you've got to use it all the time."

(On the third down, Baruch hits the line for a yard.

Fourth down and 4 to go. And now for one of the most exciting moments of the game! As Baruch starts to punt, the entire Yale team seems to break through. Sturhahn blocks the punt and the ball rolls back to Princeton's 10, where Dan falls upon it.)

CAULKINS: "The blocked punt was my fault. My job is to protect the kicker. I saw both the Yale guard and tackle (*Sturhahn and Richards*) coming my way. That was a tough second for me. I finally threw myself

at the tackle and took him out. If I had caught the guard the kick might not have been blocked."

RECK: "And then you got up, ran back and fell on the ball. Fast work."

CAULKINS: "But the ball went to Yale on downs."

RECK: "Still, if you hadn't recovered it, Yale might have made a touchdown. I suppose, though, you would have done better to kick on third down, so that if you muffed your attempt to punt, you'd have another chance."

CAULKINS: "Of course, when you're back in your own territory. But when you have confidence in your line and kicker, you like to use all your downs. We were almost on the 30."

(Yale's ball on Princeton's 10! What a chance Eli has now to push over a touchdown and upset the favorites!)

BUNNELL: "I tried Holabird on a slant at Princeton's right end and gained about 2 yards."

RECK: "Why did you hit Princeton's right?"

BUNNELL: "That was their weak side. You can always size up your opponents after a few minutes of play by the way they come through at you. Some fellows just bump you, easy. Others *sock* you. And the information you get that way helps you decide where to send your plays. My next guess wasn't so good—tried another line play and lost a yard. Tried the line a third time and got a 5 yard penalty here—for offside."

CAULKINS: "We refused the penalty."

RECK: "Why?"

CAULKINS: "By refusing the penalty we made it fourth down. Five yards did not mean so much to us

here. What we wanted to do was to give Yale one less chance to score."

BUNNELL: "Good judgment, too. If you had accepted the penalty we'd have been only 5 yards farther back—and still two tries for a touchdown. With a single down left, there was only one thing to do, and that was to use our scoring play. You know—the one where the halfback heaves a flat zone pass—a short, swiftly thrown one—to the right end, and the right end lobs it to the other halfback who is coming around outside of him. It's a surprise play, and hard to stop."

RECK: "What happened to it?"

BUNNELL: "Our end got the pass all right, but he lobbed it 'way over Holabird's head. He just got excited, I guess."

(And thus passes Yale's glorious opportunity to step into the lead! Princeton gets the ball on the 14, tries one play at the line and then kicks to the Yale 40. Yale cracks the line once and then essays the time-honored Statue of Liberty play—the one in which a man gets back in kicking position, receives the ball, carries it back as if to pass, and lets an end come around and take it from his extended hand for a wide sweep around the other end.)

BUNNELL: "The reason we tried this play is because we had been kicking on second downs. Princeton would expect a kick, and be unprepared for a running play from kick formation."

(But the Statue of Liberty play gains very little, and after another slant at the line, Yale kicks to the Tiger 27.)

CAULKINS: "I signaled for a fair catch. The ends

were close—I'd have been tackled before I'd taken a step—I'd already fumbled one punt, and I was taking no chances."

(On Princeton's first play, Baruch goes back to kicking position and heaves a pass to Caulkins for a 27-yard gain that puts the ball on Yale's 46.)

RECK: "What's the reason the pass was so successful?"

CAULKINS: "You remember, two or three times before this, I had run wide around right end while the play went through the line. The first time, the Yale defensive half followed me. The second time he ran a few steps, looked at me, and stopped. The third time, he didn't go out at all. And now I knew the time was ripe to take a pass from Baruch."

(Here is Princeton's first real threat—first down on the Yale 46—but two offside penalties in succession ruin it.)

CAULKINS: "One of our ends was responsible for both penalties. He was lining up wrong."

(At this point, Goodwine takes Holabird's place in the Blue back-field. Princeton punts to Bunnell on the Yale 29 just as the quarter ends. The second period, crammed with action, surprises and scores, starts tamely.)

BUNNELL: "I started out by trying Goodwine at the line twice, and I think it was bad judgment. He was our kicker, and I was tiring him. On the third down I sent him back to kick, and Princeton partly blocked it. I was in about the same position as Dan, the previous quarter, when we blocked Baruch's kick. I saw the tackle and end both coming at me. I got the tackle, but the end cut

in and succeeded in partially blocking the punt. I don't think it would have happened if I had given Goodwine a rest before kicking."

(The punt only goes 7 yards, and Princeton has the ball on Yale's 37. A line play nets a yard, and a pass, seven more.)

CAULKINS: "On this play I ran to the right again, and this time the Yale half followed me, leaving our halfback free to receive the pass."

(Real strategy there. Caulkins' habit of running to the right whether the play is through the line or in the air is puzzling the Yale backs. Earlier in the game, when Caulkins ran to the right, nothing happened, and the Yale back ceased trying to cover him. Later, Caulkins circles to the right and receives a pass. And now he goes to the right again—this time drawing the Yale back out and opening a gap in the Yale secondary where Miles receives Baruch's heave. Now it's third down and 2 yards to gain, on Yale's 30.)

CAULKINS: "I'm not strong for a line plunge in a position like this. Your opponents expect it and their defense is drawn in to meet it. It's a good place for a pass. It's easier to score from the 30 yard line than it is from the 3 and you ought to try a play that has a chance of getting you across."

(Following this reasoning, Caulkins calls for a pass which is completed for a 17 yard gain. That makes it first down for the Tiger on Yale's 13!)

CAULKINS: "When we lined up, I saw that the Yale line was spread out and I sent Bridges straight through. He made 5 yards."

BUNNELL: "Our line was worried. Your passes had us guessing."

CAULKINS: "You tightened up, though. Our next drive made 3 yards, and the third plunge only a couple of feet, leaving us on your 4 yard line."

(Fourth down and less than a yard to go! Most quarterbacks call for a line plunge to gain those precious inches for a first down, but Dan has a different idea—)

CAULKINS: "I'm all against a line play here. The Yale forwards were drawn in tight—shoulder to shoulder. The wing backs were right behind the tackles. I figured if I could take a short lateral pass to the right there'd be no danger of interception and I would be able to beat anybody in a race to the side lines."

(That's exactly what happened. Dan catches a short pass from Baruch, takes the Yale defense by surprise, and legs it for the other side of the field crossing the goal just before he reaches the side line. Baruch kicks goal and the score is Princeton 7, Yale 0. Yale then chooses to receive, and Baruch kicks off to Bunnell, who runs the ball back to the 22. At this point, Bunnell uses his eyes—and takes advantage of what he sees.)

BUNNELL: "We punted on the first down. I saw that Dan was playing close and didn't expect a punt. The ball went over his head and rolled back to the Princeton 25."

Great kicking! Good headwork. But Princeton is in a conquering mood. Caulkins tries one play at the line and then calls for a pass. Here, again, Dan runs wide

around the right end, and the Yale half doesn't know whether to cover him or not. He wishes he had, because Caulkins receives the pass and makes 20 yards. Two more passes and a plunge drives a shaky, bewildered Yale defense back to its own 23. Here Captain Bunnell rallies his team, and stops the next three plays for less than 2 yards gain. On fourth down, Princeton drops back to the 25 and dropkicks. Score: Princeton 10, Yale 0.)

BUNNELL: "We chose to receive."

RECK: "Why?"

BUNNELL: "Our team was upset—afraid of Princeton's passing. We wanted the ball to start an offense of our own and get back some of our confidence."

(Yale starts out indomitably to overcome the Tiger advantage. Failing receives the kick-off on the 10 and carries it to the 33 in a magnificent run. On the first play, the Yale fullback—Kline—steps through a hole on the right side of Princeton's line, shakes off several tacklers and makes 15 yards. Failing shoots through center for 5 more. Here is a Yale team, fighting against adversity with a rush that is taking Princeton off her feet.)

BUNNELL: "It was time to vary the line attack, so we tried a reverse."

RECK: "That's the one where your back takes the ball, runs to the right, passes it to another back, who carries it to the left and in turn passes it to another man who swings back on a wide end run?"

BUNNELL: "Yes. You bring your own linesmen back out of the line to run interference for you. Have to, because you have already scattered your backs."

RECK: "Did it work?"

BUNNELL: "Lost us 5 yards. The man who carried the ball last was groggy—he'd been severely bumped on the previous play—and couldn't get away. The coach took him out on this play and sent in Hoben."

(This 5-yard loss temporarily halts the Blue advance, and Yale punts beautifully to the Tiger 3, where a Yale man falls on the ball to keep it from rolling over the goal. This would have given Princeton the ball on its own 20.)

CAULKINS: "That left us in a tough position. We couldn't kick safely because the goal posts were in the way. I finally sent Bridges off right tackle to get away from the posts and give our kicker more room. He didn't gain."

(Now comes the most unusual, most interesting play of the game. Caulkins—unwilling to risk a kick—calls for a forward pass from behind his own goal line! And then—disaster! Hoben, of Yale, intercepts it and dodges all the way back to the Tiger 3.)

RECK: "Why did you risk a pass here, when you were 10 points ahead and the half almost over?"

CAULKINS: "Because I thought a punt might be disastrous. Yale had already blocked one punt, and would certainly try harder than ever to do it now. I could just see Sturhahn and Richards breaking through. Even if Yale didn't block it there was danger that the ball would hit the goal posts, or that the kicker, worried by the posts, would get off a poor kick. And the best of punts would surrender the ball to Yale on our own 30 or 35."

RECK. "But wouldn't an intercepted pass be even more fatal than a poor kick?"

CAULKINS: "Not a long pass. With our ends going down under it, a long pass, intercepted, is as good as a punt. Better, in this case, because if we punted, Bunnell could have signaled for a fair catch and had a free chance at a dropkick. But we didn't expect it to be intercepted. So far, we had completed 11 out of 13 passes."

RECK: "And you figured that the chances were 11 to 2 that you would complete this one?"

CAULKINS: "Better than that because Yale wouldn't be expecting a pass. Baruch is one of the coolest, most accurate passers I've ever seen, and I felt certain that he'd get away with it. And if he did, we'd be in possession of the ball, perhaps on the 30-yard line, whereas a punt—even a successful one—would have given Yale the ball in about the same place."

RECK: "To sum it up, you thought that a pass was a safer way out of your difficult position than a punt."

CAULKINS: "That's it, exactly. Even the best punt would give our opponents a chance for a fair catch and a dropkick—"

(The team receiving a fair catch is permitted by the rules to try a dropkick with the other team lined up ten yards in front of them. A sure score, if the goal is not too far away and the kicker a good one.)

CAULKINS: "—while a pass would permit us to hold the ball and gain distance. If it was grounded we'd still have a chance to punt and if it was intercepted, we could tackle the interceptor and be in as good position as if we'd punted."

RECK: "What actually happened?"

CAULKINS: "I ran forward and got into the clear. If

Baruch had seen me, I think the play would have been successful. But the pass was too far away for me to reach, and Hoben" (*Yale*) "caught it. I made a dive for him and missed, and he ran straight down the side line to within three yards of our goal."

(*Yale tries two plays at the line and fails to gain. On the next play, Goodwine circles Princeton's right end, twisting, pivoting and stiff-arming his way over the goal for a touchdown. Sturhahn kicks goal and the score is Princeton 10, Yale 7. Anybody's game now! Princeton elects to receive the kick-off.*)

CAULKINS: "We chose to receive because the half was nearly up and we wanted to hold the ball until the gun."

(*But the half isn't over, by a long shot! Princeton receives the kick-off and runs it back to the 37. After one line play, Princeton tries a pass, but two Yale linemen break through and knock the ball from the passer's hands while he's attempting to get it off. Madly inspired defense, that!*)

BUNNELL: "We missed a golden chance there. Both Richards and Sturhahn got through on that play, and both of them went for the passer. If one of them had taken the ball and the other had blocked the passer out of the way, we'd have had a touchdown. Just one of those plays where the sudden flash of inspiration did not come."

(*It's now Yale's ball on Princeton's 22—and the time growing short!*)

BUNNELL: "Coach Jones sent in the best passer we have—Noble. The half was so nearly up that we abandoned the huddle and used signals. Noble's first

pass was incomplete and his second one was good for only two yards. We had to pass, because there wasn't time enough to attempt to gain the distance to the goal through the line."

(The next pass is grounded behind the goal line, the Yale end just missing it by a few inches. Princeton takes the ball on her 20, tries a few plays and then kicks to Bunnell who runs it back to the middle of the field. At this point a new man goes in for Yale.)

RECK: "Why did Coach Jones put in a man here?"

BUNNELL: "He sent in a place-kicker. There was only time for one play. But before we could get it off, the half ended."

RECK: "Lord! What a football game!"

(Between halves, the bands line up behind the goal posts down at the open ends of the great horseshoe. At the other end, high up on the stadium's tower, stands a lone bugler. He lifts his trumpet to his lips and starts blowing taps. At the first note the immense throng rises, and stands silent and bareheaded. When the last note of the bugle dies out, the two bands, whose ranks form the letters "W A L T E R C A M P," play in unison "Bright College Years." This simple, reverent tribute to the dean of American intercollegiate sports is the only ceremony that takes place between halves. When the teams again take the field, the sun is attempting to break through the gray cloak of sky.)

RECK: "What happens between halves? Did you get talked to?"

BUNNELL: "We didn't get raked over the coals, if that's what you mean. Tad Jones doesn't do anything

like that. He explains to a few men where they have missed their assignments—why certain plays have failed. But he never calls anybody names. He gets his players to work for him by winning their friendship and respect."

RECK: "What happened in the Princeton dressing room?"

CAULKINS: "Roper decided to change our entire attack and put in a set of running backs—all sophomores. During the first half we had made most of our gains through passes, and there was a possibility that Yale had solved them. So we planned to switch to a running attack."

(With the referee's whistle starting the second half, a desperate battle starts—Yale trying to score a touch-down and win the game: Princeton hanging doggedly to her slender margin and trying to increase it to a safe lead. Bunnell receives the kick-off and carries it to the 25. Three plays give Yale a first down on the 37. Goodwine squirms and twists his way around end for 27 yards, where Dan brings him down, making it first down on the Tiger 35. Here, the Tiger holds and Yale is forced to punt over the goal line. Princeton takes the ball on her 20 and tries her new offensive—the running attack. In three plays it fails to gain, and Requardt punts to Bunnell on Yale's 30. The Yale captain, with a dazzling burst of speed, dodges at least five tacklers and brings the ball back to mid-field. A line play fails to gain but a Princeton offside gives Yale the ball on the Tiger 45. Here's where strategy counts.)

BUNNELL: "Our next two plays should really be

considered together. First I sent Brandenburg through the line. He made about three yards. This was our second play in two downs—and the Princeton ends and backs were playing close in. So I called for a delayed pass—one in which I fake the ball to Brandenburg going through the line, and in reality, toss it to Goodwine for an end run."

RECK: "How did it work?"

BUNNELL: "Goodwine made 10 yards."

(This successful bit of strategy, however, avails the Bulldog nothing because the Tiger tightens up. An exchange of punts gives Yale the ball again on Princeton's 45. Two plays gain five yards for the Bulldog, making it third down and five to go on the Tiger 40. Once more Yale is in a great position to loose her bag of tricks.)

BUNNELL: "We tried our scoring play again—the one that failed in the first quarter."

RECK: "You mean the play where the back passes to the end, and the end—just before he is tackled—lobs the ball sideways, to another back?"

BUNNELL: "Yes. This time it worked—for 28 yards."

(First down now on Princeton's 12! But the referee calls a penalty on Yale for clipping, and brings the ball back to the 29. Bunnell then takes the ball around right end, and dodges his way 25 yards to the Princeton 4, leaving a trail of Tiger tacklers in his wake! The most brilliant, inspired run of the game!)

CAULKINS: "I almost died. I thought the game was gone, right there."

BUNNELL: "The only reason I took the ball on that

play was because Goodwine was tired. As it happened, the interference worked perfectly, and all I had to do was run."

RECK: "Who tackled you?"

BUNNELL: "Dan got me from the front, and Lawler from the side. I should have nose-dived for the goal."

(First down on Princeton's 4—Yale's most glowing chance to win the game—and her greatest disaster.)

BUNNELL: "We were close to the side lines, and I took the ball around end again, to get back in the middle of the field. This time, Lawler got through and socked me for a five-yard loss."

(Second down and 9 to go for a touchdown.)

BUNNELL: "I sent Brandenburg on a reverse to the right of the line. He made about a yard."

(Third and 8. Now the catastrophe! The Yale backs lined up. On the previous plays, they had started to the left and Brandenburg had taken the ball to the right. This time the backs start to the right. The ball comes back from center, hits the ground and rolls backward to the 25, where Princeton recovers!)

CAULKINS: "What on earth happened there, Phil?"

BUNNELL: "The center misunderstood the signal. He thought the play was going the other way."

(But Yale, refusing to be disheartened by the calamity, holds Princeton for two downs, forces her to kick, and again has the ball—this time on the Yale 44. A line play gains a yard and then Bunnell tries a pass.)

BUNNELL: "It was a flat zone pass from Goodwine to me. He threw it a shade too far behind me, and Bartell (*Princeton*) intercepted it."

CAULKINS: "He had a clear field to the goal, but he slipped."

BUNNELL: "Funny thing. When we tried that same play against the Army, Wilson intercepted it and ran 85 yards for a touchdown—right down the side line. I dived and missed him, and when I got up I was sure I saw a footprint where he had stepped outside. I called the referee's attention to it, but he said it was someone else's footprint."

RECK: "Tough luck."

BUNNELL: "The referee was right. I saw movies of the play later."

(Now the tables are turned—Princeton's ball in mid-field. Three downs make 9 yards, and it's fourth down and 1 to go on Yale's 35.)

RECK: "When you're in a tight place like that, do the players talk it over while they are huddling?"

CAULKINS: "Not on your life. No one is allowed to talk in the huddle except the quarterback. It's entirely up to him. In this case, I called for a line play. Bridges went through for five yards."

(This is the Tiger's first down during the second half, and with it, the quarter ends. As the final period starts, Yale—realizing that she has just fifteen minutes in which to overcome the Tiger lead—stiffens up and throws Princeton back two yards in three plays. Princeton kicks to the Yale 14, and Yale immediately punts to the Princeton 48.)

RECK: "Why did you punt on first down? You might have tried a play or two and got away from your own goal line."

BUNNELL: "I may have used bad judgment here, but

I thought Dan was playing close and I might get one over his head. Goodwine is a great kicker. Only weighs 144 pounds, but he can certainly get away the punts."

(And now, with the ball in Princeton's possession in the middle of the field, comes another break. After three plays Requardt goes back to kick, receives the pass from center, juggles the ball and is smothered by Yale tacklers before he is able to punt. The ball goes to Yale. At this point, Noble replaces Goodwine in the Yale backfield.)

RECK: "Did he bring any instructions with him?"

BUNNELL: "Jones never sends in any instructions during a game. He leaves the direction of the play entirely up to the quarterback."

CAULKINS: "Same with Roper. Every evening after practice I talk for a half hour with Roper, and I'm supposed to know his style of play well enough not to need instructions during a game."

RECK: "Why was Noble sent in?"

BUNNELL: "Noble, as I've mentioned, is a passer, and we might need him in a final effort to score."

(Two plays, however, fail to gain, and Yale punts to the Tiger 10, where the ball is downed. Princeton tries two plays and kicks.)

BUNNELL: "That kick was a break! It was a low, short punt—so short that I couldn't get up to catch it, even though I was playing only about 25 yards back. The ball landed in front of me, bounced over my head, and rolled all the way back to our 37."

(Here, after one slant at the line, Yale again works her double pass—this time it gains 8 yards.)

CAULKINS: "Funny thing about that play. Three

years ago, Bill Roper and I saw the Penn-Cornell game at Philadelphia. Tad Jones, by the way, was just a few seats away. Penn used the double pass once and made 40 yards for a touchdown, and later worked it for 60 yards and another touchdown. We all remarked, then, what a good play it was. The next summer, I taught it to a prep school team. And now, in my last game of intercollegiate football, you spring it on us for good gains. It's a play you can't stop."

BUNNELL: "The only way to stop it is to take out the end."

(The end, you see, is the first man to receive the pass, and if he's taken out, the play is stopped before it is started.)

CAULKINS: "But you don't know in advance what the play is going to be."

(The double pass advances the ball to Yale's 45, and on the next play Noble slants at the end for 7 more and first down on Princeton's 48. A penalty takes it to the Tiger 48, and here comes a break that almost upsets Princeton. Yale heaves a pass that Willauer (Princeton) intercepts, but—)

BUNNELL: "I was to receive that pass, but I slipped. It didn't make any difference because the ball didn't come anywhere near me—went way over to the side lines where Willauer intercepted it. I was certain he had caught it out of bounds, in which case it should be ruled as an incompleated forward pass. And so I protested. The referee had seen me fall, and I guess he thought I was claiming interference."

CAULKINS: "So that's what happened! I never knew until now—"

BUNNELL: "And the referee gave us the ball where I had fallen."

RECK: "Whom did he say interfered?"

BUNNELL: "Prendergast—who wasn't within 5 yards of me when I fell. I didn't know what it was all about myself, until too late to remedy the error."

(With the ball on Princeton's 37, Yale has a final opportunity to drive for the Tiger goal.)

BUNNELL: "I asked the referee how much time was left."

CAULKINS: "So did I—after every play."

BUNNELL: "There were about three minutes—plenty of time for a touchdown if our plays worked. Noble hit the line for three yards, and then we were penalized 15. That was a sock!"

RECK: "What was it for?"

BUNNELL: "Clipping, I guess."

CAULKINS: "Maybe the referee wanted to even things up after ruling 'interference' on that pass."

(Play grows hot as the game draws to a close. Princeton intercepts a Yale pass and takes it to the Blue 35. Here the Tiger makes 9 yards in three plays.)

CAULKINS: "I tried a fourth play rather than kick, because there was only one minute to go, and I wanted to hang onto the ball."

(But Yale, desperately fighting for a last chance, stops the next play dead and takes the ball on downs. A grim Bulldog there—insistently growling for one more chance at the goal! Princeton, determined to hold her slim lead, stops two line plays and knocks down a pass. An exchange of punts gives Yale the ball on her 34.)

BUNNELL: "There was time for only a couple of plays. We tried a pass that was incomplete. Then, because I knew Princeton was expecting passes, I sent our halfback through the line. He made 5 yards."

CAULKINS: "About then the timekeeper was getting his gun out."

BUNNELL: "Time for just one more play, I figured, and—"

(Here Bunnell calls for a pass, catches it just as the gun is fired, squirms away from two tacklers and is off for the Princeton goal and the winning touchdown.)

BUNNELL: "I made about 15 yards."

RECK: "Who tackled you?"

BUNNELL: "Caulkins."

RECK: "Great guns! What a game!"

THE BRAVE AWAKEN

BY LAURENCE JORDAN

THE sets stood two all and the games 5-6 in favor of Chanler College when Jack Sanderson's ankle went bad.

Jack, slim and black-haired, had slipped a little and as a result the ball had gone out of bounds on that precious point. A streak of pain shot through the ankle and as the spent young player felt the sharp twinge, it seemed the last straw.

Over on the other side of the net Heywood and Small appeared fresh, irresistible. Instinctively, Jack felt that he and Tom were licked. In the crowded stands, the throngs watching the match that would decide the champion team in freshman doubles were leaning forward tensely as the teams changed courts.

Jack dropped his racket listlessly at his side and limped along by the side of big, blond Tom Craven.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom in his deep voice.

He shot a sidelong look at his partner and that look had no sympathy in it.

"My ankle's gone out. I won't be any good."

"What do you mean, gone out?" Craven asked. "You can walk, can't you? And there are only a couple of games to go. Forget it, and play your game!"

Jack looked up with smouldering resentment but he

did not answer. Then he forgot his resentment in his efforts to favor his weak ankle. He did not realize that with every passing second he was attaching greater importance to the passing twist of a tendon. Well, he reflected, they couldn't be blamed for being defeated now, anyhow. He limped along, biting his lip. He did not notice the odd look in Tom's eyes, nor the fact that his big friend's face was downcast and bitter.

The two had known each other since they were youngsters, and this wasn't the first time Tom had seen Jack start to sag.

But suddenly the Herculean athlete squared his shoulders.

"Tough break," he said. Then, reassuringly, "I'll take all I can get."

They set themselves: Tom, grimly determined; Jack, wearily listless.

"Ready?" shouted Heywood from the far court.

"Ready!" barked Tom.

Heywood's serve came and Tom returned it, cutting it so neatly that Small sent it into the net.

"Ready?" Heywood called again.

"Ready!" said Jack.

Heywood's first serve was out and the second one came over the net gently, and bounced high. Jack made a half-hearted effort to get it. He got his racket on it but the ball sailed far out of the court. As his left foot hit the ground his face twisted—twisted unconsciously into a far more agonized expression than the pain warranted. He could hear the stands buzzing with sympathy, and when he walked back into position his limp was more pronounced.

He was small and wiry and his speed was the secret of his game. He had no reach, and with his speed partly gone, all his interest had gone with it. He could not bring the stands to their feet now—and besides he had a feeling that he and Tom were licked anyhow.

"What's the matter?" Tom snapped.

"It's no good, Tom. My ankle's too bad."

"You could have got that one without half trying. You—"

"Ready?" shouted Heywood.

"Ready!"

It was a long volley and Tom was all over the court like a cannon ball, playing for Chanler practically alone. Sometimes there was a ball Jack would have to take and then he returned it half-heartedly. At last Tom placed the ball neatly in a far corner. It was their point.

"You're lying down!" he said slowly, as he passed Jack.

For a second resentment flamed up in the smaller player's eyes.

"My ankle hurts me so I can't even keep my mind on the game," he flared. "I—"

"Don't tell me. When you hit a ball you can at least hit it so that—"

"Ready?"

"Ready."

Jack's voice was plaintive. Once again Tom turned into a streaking, overpowering machine. He was everywhere at once, socking, placing; and Jack, playing his role of martyr, stood almost crowded off the court.

Somehow Tom won. The stands cheered him for a full two minutes as the losers were coming up to shake

hands. Jack listened enviously to the uproar. Tough luck that he himself had been crippled. He hobbled along painfully to meet the Grey team at the net.

"What happened?" the Grey men asked him.

"My ankle went out."

"Oh."

Silently Tom helped him back to the gym. It was balm to Jack's soul to hear words of sympathy from all sides. Yet he cast occasional sidelong looks at Tom. He had never before seen that peculiarly grim expression on his big friend's face. They sat on the bench, and Jack nursed his ankle. He glanced again at Tom.

"You played a great game, old fellow," he said uncertainly. "Sorry I couldn't help—"

Tom turned to him. The blaze that had been in his steady gray eyes in the heat of battle had gone, but there was something doggedly determined about him.

"Listen, Jack," he said deliberately. "You and I have known each other a long time and I've always wanted to tell you something, and by the mighty, I'm going to tell it to you now! I wanted to tell you the time I carried you that five miles when we were at prep school, but I wasn't sure I was right. I know I'm right now."

"Yeah?" said Jack. There were quick danger signals dancing in his eyes. Somehow he knew what Tom was going to say. "Well, shoot."

Tom was standing over him now and there was pain in the big athlete's eyes.

"You could have helped me to-day," he said doggedly, "but you wouldn't. You lay down, not only on me, but

on Chanler. I may as well shoot the works. You quit like a hound—”

“You can’t get away with that!” the slim young player exploded furiously. “You take that back, or I’ll—”

“You’ll do what?” Tom cut in icily. “And don’t try to kid me the way you kid yourself and the crowd! A little twisted ankle! That was all. But you couldn’t make your grandstand plays—so you quit, and then made yourself a martyr as an alibi! Gave up, that’s what you did. You quit! You’ve done it before, too, and don’t tell me you haven’t, for—”

“Shut up!”

Jack’s voice was so choked with wrath he could barely talk. He was beside himself with fury, the more so because deep down within him he had a rotten feeling that he was wrong. But that did not prevent him from going on in a torment of words!

“If I didn’t have this ankle, I’d beat you within an inch of your life!” he almost shouted. “Think I lay down, do you? Well, maybe if you’d ever felt any pain instead of always playing in your soft luck—”

“Oh, be yourself,” Tom Craven said in savage anguish. “You quit, I tell you! When a ball came right at you, you just tapped it instead of fighting it! Gave up! Lay down! Quit, that’s what you did! You might just as well have been playing for Grey.”

“I won’t stand—”

“You will stand it,” Tom swept on, and now his great hands were twisting at his sides. “You may be the best player that ever played tennis at Chanler when

you're ahead, but to-day when you were behind, you were the worst one any college ever had. If you don't get wise to yourself, you'll have as much chance for the Varsity next year as—"

"Shut your mouth, you self-satisfied preacher!" Jack burst forth and now he was on his feet. He had forgotten his ankle completely. "Varsity, huh? Might as well have been playing for Grey College huh? Well, next year I will be playing for Grey. What do you think of that?"

For a second he stood there, his chin outthrust, his hot eyes boring into the coldly glinting ones of his former friend.

"I'm transferring, see?" he rushed on again. "I don't want to be at any college where you are, understand? And if I ever play with you again, you'll know I've gone crazy! And I never want to hear another word from you! Get that?"

His ankle did not prevent him from stalking out of the locker room.

So it was that the next fall found a miserable Jack Sanderson transferred to Grey College, Chanler's ancient rival. It was not in him to admit that he was wrong, and as he wandered about the strange campus at the start of the semester he thought of himself as a martyr to the ingratitude of the college he had served so well. His clean cut, eager face was thinner, his brown eyes more brooding. But before long the ivied buildings grew familiar and he grew to love the place as anyone grows to love his college. Somehow, though, there was something missing, but he would not admit what it was.

Early in the year he called on the tennis coach in his

rooms. The coach was in an easy chair talking to Small, but when Jack came in he stood up and held out his hand.

"Hello, Sanderson," he said. "I'm mighty glad to see you. We were wondering what we were going to do against you and Craven this year, with Heywood graduated. Of course, I'm not looking a gift horse in the mouth, but tell me—how did you come to transfer?"

For a split second that question seemed to be like a probe that opened up a hidden sore spot of which Jack was ashamed. Just for an instant, though, and then he was fooling himself once more, as he had done all along.

"Oh," he said guardedly, "I don't know. I didn't like Chanler so well. I just decided to try another college. I thought maybe I'd be happier at Grey."

"Well, we're glad you came anyway," said the coach. "Of course you're going to play tennis?"

"Of course."

"Fine. It'll be a funny feeling if you play against your old partner, maybe, eh?"

"It'll be a fine feeling," Jack flared, off guard for a moment.

The coach raised somewhat surprised eyebrows. Small laughed a little.

"From what Craven said," he remarked, "it looks as though we might have something of a grudge match."

Jack, on guard again, didn't answer; but he looked at the fire with brooding eyes. Again the memory of that tongue lashing in the locker room came back to him, and the blood slowly suffused his face.

"Well," the coach said quickly, "we'll soon be at practice now. You might come around this afternoon

and work out indoors a little. Some of the boys are coming. Except for that last game," he went on, studying Jack unobtrusively, "you had a wonderful record last year."

Jack's eyes flashed.

"What last game?"

"The one where your ankle went bad."

"That wasn't my fault," Jack snapped.

"I know it wasn't. Don't get excited. Ankle all right now?"

"Sure. But the last of that match I had all I could do to keep from passing out."

"Well, I'm glad it's O.K.," the coach said, smiling. "And I'm glad you came in. I'll be seeing a lot of you." He held out his hand in token of dismissal.

Jack went out slowly. For a reason he could not fathom, there seemed to him to be a fly in the pleasant ointment of the coach's welcome. He did not feel as happy as he should have.

And even after the season started, the fiery youngster was conscious always of a dull ache within him. Perhaps it was that deep-seated unhappiness that made him a demon on the court from the very start of the schedule. He appeared to be everywhere at once, at the net, on the back line, in mid-air. He played an erratic but tireless game, and not a single match did he lose.

That spring he defeated the number one men of college after college, playing fiercely as though some intangible thing were rubbing his spirit raw. Yet always the thought of the Chanler match—the climax of the season except for the intercollegiate tournament—hung over him like a black shadow.

It was a nervous, grim-faced young player who came into his room a few afternoons before the Chanler match—and stared wide-eyed at a letter on the table. The handwriting sent a stab of feeling through him. It was Tom Craven's, and for some reason he hated to open that letter.

Finally he did so and his eyes darted over it quickly as though to find out the worst. Then, reassured, he read it slowly, as though every word were priceless.

DEAR JACK:

Since you fellows are our guests this year, won't you let bygones be bygones, and put up with me during the matches? I've been tickled to death about what you've done this year. You sure have been knocking the boys silly, haven't you? It will be great to see you again, and I'm looking forward to it. We might even break training to the extent of sitting up an hour or so too late, eh, what?

As always,
TOM.

A warm rush of gladness swept over the sensitive youngster as he read and reread the letter. For a moment it seemed that a great burden had been lifted from his spirit. He sat down to think. A thousand happy memories of his years with Tom swept over him.

But then, like a dash of icy water, came the thought of that afternoon in the gymnasium. Again Tom's savagely contemptuous words were searing his very soul and again he was writhing helplessly under the lash of his friend's tongue. The torturing knowledge deep down within him that he had been at fault only flayed his spirit into new heights of resentment. His face grew red and his fists clenched, even there alone with himself, at the humiliation of the thing. And it was a bitter false

pride that sent him to the table, tight-lipped and hard-eyed, to write:

TOM:

Thanks for the invitation. Sorry, but I have made other arrangements.

J. S.

Finally, after three days that had seemed like an eternity, the afternoon of the Grey-Chanler matches came. Jack had spent the interval in almost continuous brooding, and by the time he arrived at Chanler an overwhelming victory over Tom was the burning desire of his life.

In order to avoid meeting his enemy he changed into flannels at the hotel in town and did not stop at the gymnasium on the way to the courts. The first matches were to be singles. He sat in the stands, taut and silent, watching the two matches that preceded his own with Tom.

Small beat his man 3-1. A new player for Chanler, Snyder, played an unexpectedly brilliant game and took the second match from Thompson, Grey's third man, 3-0. The singles victory lay between himself and Tom.

There was a burst of hand-clapping and cheering as they came out on the court. The Chanler yell, somehow, made his heart pound and then sink miserably. Subconsciously he knew that the stands were settling back with tense expectation, for he and Tom were admittedly the two finest players in Eastern collegiate tennis that year. The strange, unexpected feud that had been gossiped about in both colleges was the crowning element that made the match a climax.

Tom walked up to Jack's side for the toss, smiling his old familiar smile.

"Hello, Jack," he said evenly. "How have you been?"

"O.K.," snapped Jack.

The meeting was a grilling ordeal for him. He spun his racket, his eyes on the ground.

"Rough," said Tom.

It was Craven's serve and the game was on.

That first set was a battle that had the two thousand spectators on the edge of their seats. Jack played at the very peak of his game. He was somewhat erratic because he smashed every ball with all that was in him, but he played marvelous tennis. That match was one to remember. A battle between stars. Tom, easy, graceful, steady; Jack, fiery, tireless, up and down in all corners of the court at once.

Tom fought doggedly, and practically every game went to deuce. When the set stood at 5-5, Jack, playing as though the whole world were encompassed in that sun-flooded court, broke through Tom's serve after deuce had been called nine times, and then in a rush that would not be denied took his serve and the set at 7-5.

"I guess that'll show him," he thought to himself savagely, as they changed courts. "I've got him now."

But had he? Doubts assailed him toward the middle of the set. Tom seemed to improve. He was playing almost errorless tennis, and Jack, winded and sweating, began to feel as though he were battering his head against a stone wall. After a seemingly endless series of long volleys that usually ended by Jack's making an error, Tom swept to victory at 6-4. The stands were

breathless. No one could guess now the outcome of the match.

The third set was terrific.

Jack fought like a madman, socking every ball with all his strength and sending it streaking like a line of light to the most difficult corner of the court, and yet he could not get the upper hand. Some of Tom's gets were almost superhuman, and always the ball came back. With the score 4-5, Tom broke through Jack's serves and the third set was his.

During the ten-minute rest interval, while he was taking a quick shower to refresh himself, Jack was abjectly miserable. He had a feeling that Tom was unbeatable to-day—that he was licked. He came out on the court with hanging head, walking as though unutterably weary.

It was Tom's serve. The ball came across the net like a cannon ball, dipped sharply to the corner of the service court, and bounded high. Jack flung himself at it, slashing blindly. The ball hurtled into the net and as he hit the ground a quick stab of pain went through his ankle. It didn't amount to much—something like that was apt to happen at any time because the ankle really was weak—but nevertheless he called time. A murmur ran through the stands as he knelt down to examine it. The Grey trainer came running out, along with the coach.

"Ankle go bad?" the coach snapped.

Jack nodded. "But I'll carry on," he said. "Nothing you can do, Doc. I'll be all right, I guess."

Nevertheless, when he walked over for the next service he was limping. During the next three serves he

hardly moved from one spot. His ankle was paining him and he made listless stabs at the ball. On his own service it was plain to the spectators that the Grey man was unable to serve with his former power. Jack's face twisted with every movement and he lost the game without winning a point.

There began the most remarkable tennis match between two good players that those sympathetic spectators had ever seen. Jack was acting as though he could barely run. Deliberately Tom gave away two games. He served four double faults and returned four straight, easy serves of Jack's into the net. Two all. It was Tom's serve again and he sent the ball over easily, directly at Jack, so that the weary, quitting Grey man had no excuse not to return it, and always the return came back where he could get it.

The stands were fidgeting and murmuring as the match went on. Tom was playing exactly as Jack was. He did not attempt to place the ball where Jack could not get it and the rallies became purely a matter of which one made an error first. Jack somehow found himself furiously resentful. Tom was torturing him. His ankle was bad and he wanted to lie down and take his beating quickly. But Tom wouldn't let him. If he couldn't play, Tom wouldn't either.

Now Jack realized he was being forced into playing his best, for if he were to be beaten badly under these circumstances he would have no alibi whatever. He felt now as though he couldn't move, but on it went. Back and forth the ball sailed peacefully—until in the nature of things it fell into the net or went out. Two automatons, fixed near the back line, with power to

lean and swing arms—that was the picture the players presented. And yet under these absurd conditions each man was playing doggedly and earnestly.

But Tom was surer and steadier. Jack's impatience made him either hit balls wild or send low, vicious ones into the net. So Tom brought it up game by game to 6-3, set and match.

He ran and jumped over the net to help Jack to the stands. A sort of soft, baffled applause rolled down over the court.

"Too bad your ankle went bad again, old man," said Tom, but his face was set.

"Why should you be sorry?" Jack burst forth furiously. "You won, didn't you?"

Tom set his teeth and did not answer. What use? That Tom could be more miserable than he was himself, Jack would not have believed. The selfish, temperamental youngster could not face things.

But an hour later he was pulled up short. The blow fell just before he left the gymnasium.

"Sanderson," the coach asked him, "have you always had a weak ankle?"

"Sort of, yes."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I thought it was all right."

The coach shook his head and his eyes bored into his charge's.

"Well," he said deliberately, "we can't have an ankle on the team that always goes bad at the *important* times—"

"What are you trying to say?"

"Nothing," snapped the coach. "Keep your temper.

"But you don't play in the Intercollegiates. I'll have to try to get Small in shape."

Then it was that Jack started to plead, but the tight-tipped coach was adamant.

"I'll be careful, honest I will," Jack rushed on. "I'll wear a brace and everything—and I was feeling rotten to-day anyway. Give me another chance, Coach—"

"I'm going to see what I can do with Small first," the coach said flatly.

"But you know Small will be eliminated early," Jack told him piteously. "Honest, Coach, I—"

"Well, we'll see," the coach interrupted, and turned away.

The following week was one of long drawn-out torture for the former star of the Grey tennis team. He avoided everyone. He felt as though he were a pariah. He refused to talk. But he made up long, passionate speeches in his mind. Expected him to win when he couldn't even hobble around the court, did they? Going to keep him out of the Intercollegiates! Fine bunch they were! Maybe if they had ankles they would lose once in a while—

And so it went on until, a few days before the tournament, the coach sent for him. Jack rushed over to the gymnasium with fear for what was in store for him alternating with wild hope. If they'd only let him in and he was right he could be intercollegiate champion. If they'd only give him a chance—

The coach was serious as he turned from his desk and surveyed Jack without a smile.

"Sanderson," he said, "I have decided it's best to let you play. I'm just going to send you out there anyhow."

We haven't another man who has a chance. You'll wear an ankle brace and—" here the coach's eyes became like gimlets—"that ankle had better not get tricky."

"I'm sure it won't," Jack fairly shouted.

He rushed out of the office as though he were walking on air. He'd practice like mad, get all the sleep in the world, and be at the top of his game. And he honestly felt that when he was right not a college player in the country, no, not even Tom Craven, darn him, would ever lead him by a game. Gosh, how he'd play!

Once more he was promising things to himself.

It was two weeks later when again Jack and Tom stood side by side on the court. And again the crowd was applauding—a larger, gayer crowd than ever before.

But for Jack it was nonexistent. His eyes were narrowed; his lips were but a thin line. Two hours later he expected to be the intercollegiate champion.

"We'd better appear to be talking," Tom said unsmilingly. "I shouldn't like to let the crowd in on our little private fight."

"No?" Jack shrugged. "Who cares?"

"I suppose as soon as I get a game ahead, your ankle will go out," Tom thrust at him.

"What do you mean?" Jack flared.

"I mean that playing this match is a farce," Tom told him. "You'll lie down like a dog as soon as I get ahead. Well, I'm going to be ahead from the jump, see? You'll be limping around the court before the end of the first set on that fake ankle of yours."

"I will, will I?" raged Jack, burning with fury at his foeman's taunts.

"Yes, you will." Tom nodded contemptuously. "You're nothing but a chronic quitter. The tennis player with the chicken liver! I'll spin."

"Smooth," Jack said chokingly. He was quivering with rage.

It was smooth. He walked to the far court holding two balls in his hand, and there was a look in his eyes that was not good to see.

"Ankle Jack Sanderson. He never lost an unimportant match or won a good one," had been Craven's parting shot at him.

Jack stood there fighting for control. Every muscle and nerve in his body seemed jumping.

The umpire climbed to his high chair. The linesmen and ball boys were ready. The stands were hushed, and there was breathlessness in the very air as he managed to shout "Ready?"

"Ready!"

The word came like a bullet across the court from Tom Craven. A white ball went high in the air and Jack came down on top of it as though it were his taunting opponent. It sped into the service court, so fast that it was hard to follow it. It was a clean ace, and the game was on.

Tom, big and steady, covered the ground with faultless ease. Jack, slim and furiously swift, was a veritable comet on the court. He scarcely knew what he was doing. But he sent every ball across the net as though he would annihilate his grinning, contemptuous foe. Neither man broke service, but Jack was winning his games more easily than Tom. Three times after Craven had pulled even and was close enough to Jack to say

something, he flung out: "I'll break through this time and then your ankle will go bad, won't it?"

But he didn't break through. The raging Sanderson took the set at 7-5. Then, as though the momentum he had gained made him play even harder in the second set, he took that one at 6-4, playing the best tennis of his life. Tom Craven was not taunting him now; he was playing as only a crisis could make him play. Before Jack knew it, his big opponent had him at 2-4 in the third set.

"I might as well save myself, now," Jack thought, "for the fourth set. That's where I'll get him, after the rest."

He did not exert himself and the tennis-wise gallery did not blame him. Tom swept through at 6-2 and the men went into the gymnasium. Jack's wild fury had by this time turned into cold hate. He tried to avoid Craven but Tom, his lips twisted in a contemptuous grin, had a chance to say to him:

"Just as usual, you've shot your bolt. You're through. I'll get the next set, and then as soon as I take the first game of the third set, the stands will be crying over your bad ankle."

"It'll be good enough to kick you out of here after the match is over!"

"Is that so?" drawled Tom. "I'll be right here waiting for you. That scrap won't take long—one punch and you'll quit."

It was no wonder that Jack went back on the court with his face flushed and his throat constricted. His body turned first hot and then cold, and not until they had started playing did he come close to controlling his

nerves. In that set he fought as though for his life, and Craven was not far behind. Game after game unreeled before the absorbed gallery. The ball traveled back and forth like a white bullet and time after time the stands rose to their feet as seemingly ungettable shots were returned and lightning-like aces pulled one man after the other out of the hole.

Three times the set went to deuce, and at 7-7 Jack stepped to the base line for his serve with nothing left but his nerve. He was unutterably weary, and his ankle was paining him dully. He put all he had into his first serve, but Tom sent it sizzling back into the corner for a clean placement. Despite Jack's frantic efforts, Tom took a love game. He had broken through.

Tom walked deliberately to the net to retrieve a ball and beckoned to Jack.

"What do you want?" Jack demanded. But something impelled him to walk forward.

The stands watched silently, unable to understand what was going on.

"I just wanted to tell you," Tom jeered, "that this would be a fine time for that ankle to go bad, because this is my set!"

And it was.

As the final set started Jack took a full minute, his back to the stands, to get control of himself. The terrific ordeal he had been through that afternoon had burned the dross from his spirit; he was not fooling himself any more. Tom Craven's stabbing tongue had been like a probe lancing some putrid spot within him. No longer did he even try to deceive himself. He felt that he was beaten. He *could* alibi with his ankle—but, no! It

was going to be different now. He would fight on—no matter what happened.

And fight he did, as he had never fought before. He forgot the pain in his ankle. He knew no such thing as fatigue. All there was in his world was that taunting, white figure across the net, that contemptuous opponent he must batter down.

A dozen times Tom Craven's taunts stabbed him. "The ankle, the ankle!" Tom giped repeatedly. Four all, five all—and now Jack was limping. But he ran like a deer despite the stabs of pain.

Serving seemed agony, but as though to show his contempt for it, he served harder than ever, going high on his left toe, and hitting the ball with a sort of desperate savagery.

He was serving. The score was 40-30 in his favor. Again he sent the ball hurtling over the net.

"Out," called the umpire.

Tom Craven crept forward, obviously expecting an easy second serve. Jack, white-faced and flaming-eyed, threw the ball in the air. Deliberately he hit it with all his might. Tom, taken by surprise by a second serve that was harder, if anything, than the first, was aced cleanly.

The count was 5-6 in Jack's favor. Deliberately Jack walked forward to hand two extra balls to Tom.

"Try that on *your* ankle," he said under the cover of frantic cheering from the stands.

"I will," Tom said harshly. "I see you're limping to have your alibi set anyway. The next three games will tell the tale."

"You're darned right they will, and you'll be whipped!" Jack told him icily.

"And if I'm not, you've got that fake ankle for an alibi as usual," Tom told him.

The big fellow was white-faced and weary with a look in his eyes Jack had never seen there before. But the younger player had no time to consider what might lie back of that look.

Tom served one of those cannon-ball deliveries that were such an asset to his game. Jack, knowing that he could play but a few minutes more at best, gambled his all. The ball was only a white blur, but he swung at it furiously. It was no soft, defensive return, and as though he were in the grip of some miraculous force, he met the ball perfectly. It passed Craven, shooting down the side lines with such speed as to leave the Chanler man helpless.

Tom's next serve did not go in and the second one was soft. Jack lobbed perfectly and bounded toward the net. Craven just got it and lobbed back. The lob was a trifle short and Jack gathered himself. High in the air he bounded, and smashed the ball back with such force that it almost knocked the racket from Craven's hand. As Jack hit the ground the world reeled for a second—that pain seemed to shoot up through his thighs now. He shook his head and wiped the sweat from his forehead with a dash of his sleeve.

"Two points to go! Two points to go!" kept hammering through his mind.

Tom's first serve was in, this time, and Jack cut it back. Then there started a rally that appeared unend-

ing. To all four corners of the court the ball was sent with seemingly unerring hands; yet always it went back. Three times Tom Craven, fighting savagely, returned what had seemed like ungettable placements.

Would *nothing* serve to win that point? Jack thought despairingly. He'd let it go and try for the next one—no, he wouldn't!

He bounded across the court on a stabbing left leg and sent a beautiful backhand return down the side court. Tom caught it behind the back line and whipped it across the court but Jack was there. He caught it at about the service line with a trap shot, and dumped it neatly across the net. He had caught Tom flat-footed, and the stands went wild.

One point to go—only one! He must get it—that point was the match—he could not go on much longer—

If Tom won that game the other two would be his without a struggle. Not because he himself was quitting, though. But he was stumbling when he ran, sometimes, now. Yet even with his breath coming in great gasps, his eyes burned with an unquenchable fire as he set himself.

Tom's first serve would be in. It always was at crucial times. It came over the net with every ounce of power in Craven's superb body behind it. It seemed that Jack's vision was unusually strong, his muscles unusually responsive, his mind transcendently clear. He did not know it, but he had achieved the ultimate in concentration.

Once again he gambled gloriously. He did not endeavor to make a safe return of that lightning-like serve—instead of that his racket swept around with all the

force he could muster behind it. Inward and upward he drew it as the gut hit the ball, and it shot back low toward the net. Tom was coming in on a dead run and he got it on the full volley, but Jack was ready. He volleyed it back, angled sharply toward the side lines. Tom bounded sideward, and half volleyed it back, down the side line. Again Jack was there as though he had foreseen it. He could barely reach it, his body flung forward until it was almost parallel to the ground, his arm stretched to the limit. With a snap of his wrist Jack stung the ball back. He could not pull it across the wide open court—it smashed against the edge of Tom's racket. As it bounded high in the air and fell over Tom's own back line, the racket fell from the big fellow's half paralyzed hand.

Game, set, match! The intercollegiate championship—

The stands were on their feet, bellowing their tribute to the new champion, but the new champion had gone limp. Head down, in a daze, he was perilously close to fainting. He was literally dragging himself across the court. Eager hands reached for him and he was being carried before he knew what was happening. He was supposed to accept right there the cup he had won. But—

"Please take me to the gym first," he begged. "My ankle's pretty bad."

He was utterly spent. But as he looked down at the men who were carrying him, his eyes widened—that was Tom's grimy face and tousled blond hair below him!

For a moment he could not speak. The cheers were deafening and he could not hear what Tom was saying,

but the big fellow's lips were moving. He leaned down to hear.

"I guess the fight's off, Jack," Tom was saying. "I know I'm not going to fight you."

For a second, as recollection swept over him, Jack's eyes flashed. Suddenly Tom was grinning.

"Be yourself, now," he advised. "I was only trying to razz you until you were so sore you'd play your game, you little dumb-bell. I wanted to win that match, but not unless you were playing your prettiest against me. So I kept on razzing. I'll be dog-goned, though, if I meant to talk you into licking me!"

Somehow all the accumulated weight of their years of friendship was behind those jerking words, and it was a new Jack Sanderson who heard them and could comprehend them. He had learned what it meant to fight. His hand tightened around the brawny shoulder below him. For the moment there were no cheering Grey students milling about him, and no smiling coach, and no applauding spectators. There was no one but Tom.

"I get you, old fellow," he said huskily. "And thanks. You ought to be the best doctor in the world some day!"

BEAN BALL BILL

BY WILLIAM HEYLIGER

FROM the very beginning Bill Stockton took a violent dislike to Jerry Ames. The cold, disapproving way in which Jerry spoke of his pitching roused him to a furious pitch of anger. Had Jerry been somewhere near his size, there would have been an adequate and primitive way in which to express his anger, but Jerry was small and slight. You could not hit him without feeling yourself something of a bully. And yet, though Bill kept control of himself, Jerry made him chafe with the raw feeling that he had been placed upon the defensive.

They met the afternoon of Bill's arrival at Hastings High. Bill, as soon as classes were over, went down to take a look at the gym. Over in a corner by the lockers, a group of students talked in low, dispirited voices. Things had gone to pot. Haynes, gym director and general coach, had been run down by a skidding taxi and would be in the hospital many months with a fractured hip. Hastings High was a small town school; there was none in the faculty to take the coach's place. And Wally Woods, the captain, lacked the resolution and the strength to handle the situation alone.

Bill breezily introduced himself to the group. "My name's Stockton. I suppose it isn't often a junior drops

in here right after mid-year exams, but I didn't flunk where I came from. Dad's business came East, and he didn't want to leave me out on the coast with a continent between us. He brought me with him and here I am. Any other questions?"

Jerry Ames was the first to answer. "Who asked the first question?" he queried mildly. "I must have missed it."

Bill reddened. He had meant to establish himself on an easy footing; now he saw that they were rating him as fresh. The short spell of silence that followed was awkward. Wally Woods, to save the situation, went off on a new tack.

"You don't happen to know any news that might cheer up a baseball captain, do you?"

"I can pitch a bit if that would help you any," suggested Bill.

Wally brightened. "Curves? What wouldn't we give for one dependable curve ball pitcher!"

"Not curves," said Bill. "Control. The ball goes where I tell it to go."

They looked at him dubiously.

"I dust them off," he explained. "It's a nice way of stopping a batter from becoming too eager."

It was characteristic of Wally that he should glance at his friends with eyes that showed indecision. It was characteristic, too, that it should be Jerry Ames who answered.

"Hastings doesn't go in for that sort of stuff," Jerry said evenly.

Bill stiffened. "What sort of stuff?"

"Knocking batters cold."

"Who said anything about hitting them? I just breeze it past them—sometimes their chests, sometimes their chins. After I drive them from the plate I work the outside corners. How many hits do you think I allowed per game last year?"

"How many batters did you bean?"

"I tell you I have control," Bill repeated angrily. "When I dust them it's merely a threat."

"Suppose you do sock one of them?"

"Well—" Bill shrugged his shoulders. "It wouldn't be intentional. Anyway, I've never hurt a batter—not much, I mean. I've winged them on the arm, but that's likely to happen if a pitcher is just wild."

"I see," Jerry said thoughtfully. "If a fellow's skull gets caved in some day—well, you didn't mean it. A regular 'Bean Ball Bill'."

Bill's fists clenched. "I don't like that name."

"You gave it to yourself," retorted Jerry.

This quarreling with a boy who might be a star and the team's salvation was not to Wally's liking. "Oh, cut it out, Jerry. We'll turn out for baseball in about two weeks, Stockton, and then you can show us what you have."

"You're going to stand for this bean ball stuff?" Jerry asked in surprise. He saw the captain's eyes waver. Same old story, he told himself. Wally would swing this way and that.

"I'm due home to write some copy," he said abruptly, and disappeared through the gym doorway.

"What position does he play?" Bill demanded. "I hope he's not a catcher."

"He's not with the nine."

"And you let him put in his oar and rock the boat? What does he do, anyway? How does it happen that he's such a big shot around here?"

"He writes the school news for the *Hastings Courier*."

Bill digested this with a scowl. "What does he do, scalp his enemies and pat his friends on the back? Everybody afraid of him because of what he'll say in print? Well, if he starts rapping me there's going to be trouble."

And yet, as the trouble slowly developed, it came not because of what Jerry wrote, but because of what he did not write.

The call went out for baseball early in March and Bill, among the first to respond, soon proved that his control of a baseball was real, and beautiful to behold. Gunn, the catcher, went so far as to declare that Bill could pitch along a hair line. Wally Woods began to feel that, even though he was shy a coach, Bill Stockton might be good enough to pull him through the season.

Bill saw little of Jerry while the squad was hardening up with handball and throwing a baseball around the gym floor. Twice there had been stories of the practice, and once he was mentioned as among those there, and once he was not mentioned at all. Bill pondered this. His control was now a matter of school gossip; its sharp-shooting qualities became a favorite topic for discussion; he was a school celebrity before he had so much as pitched an inning of a game. Bill thought there ought to be a story in this—but the story did not appear.

He watched the *Courier* closely after the squad be-

gan to play on the grass of High School Field. When Wally made the first cut, Bill found his name published as one of the survivors. Just that, and no more. Later in the week, he pitched part of the first practice game of the year, and did not allow a hit or a base on balls.

"We'll see what our sour friend says of that," Bill told himself gleefully.

And all he read next day concerning his feat was:

Stockton was on the mound for the last three innings.

Bill saw red. If he was doing good work for Hastings, wasn't he entitled to his measure of credit? Was this fellow Jerry Ames bigger than the school? Would Hastings stand for him hand-picking his favorites and running a boycott on those he did not like? Was there no justice for a player who was giving his best?

He carried his wrongs to the locker room that afternoon. Roberts, the first baseman, gave him scant sympathy.

"Do you know, you almost beamed me yesterday."

"Oh, keep a grip on your nerve," Bill said irritably. "I knew just where that ball was going. I grazed you only once."

"Twice," said Roberts. "I'm not anxious to have a couple of teeth knocked out. Make sure you don't get them any closer."

"He's sore," Bill reflected, "because he didn't get a hit." It was disappointing to find the players indifferent to his woes, but he was used to boys who grew peeved when he drove them from the plate and made them look foolish. He took his troubles to the captain. There, at

least, he ought to find a friendly ear. But even Wally defended the reporter.

"Everybody rates Jerry as being pretty square," Wally told him. "He wouldn't be small enough to boycott a fellow."

"Then why is it he never writes a good word about me?"

"Why don't you talk to him?"

"I wouldn't talk to him," blurted Bill.

But he changed his mind just before the opening game with Raleigh High. Jerry had written a half column for the *Courier* setting forth what might be expected of the team. Bill read it eagerly. Here was where he ought to get his due. Instead, he found this:

Last year Brail and Thomas were the team's best pitchers. This year, again, they hold their places at the head of the hurling corps. They are not spectacular; they burn no red fires and set off no fireworks; they are simply dependable twirlers whose efforts are always smooth and even. Stockton, a newcomer, will also work in some of the games.

Bill choked. This was the limit—and Wally had told him that Jerry was square! Why, he had stood head and shoulders over Brail and Thomas in the practice games!

He had bought the *Courier* at a little store across the street from the high school. Now, through the doorway of the store, he saw Jerry come down the high school steps. Acting on impulse he stepped outside to meet the school reporter.

"Look here, Ames. What have you against me?"

"I have nothing against *you*," said Jerry.

The strong accent that fell on the "you" puzzled Bill and left him somewhat dampened. He had rather ex-

pected evasion—or voluble alibis. He shook out the *Courier*.

“What’s the idea of this? You know what I’ve been doing in practice.”

“I know.”

“Then why this—this lie? Brail and Thomas are not the stars. Where do you leave me?”

“Out of it,” Jerry said calmly. “You’re not a pitcher; you’re an intimidator. Pitchers use what skill they have; you use threats. They use a baseball as a tool with which to match their cunning against the batter’s eye. You use a baseball as a weapon. The fellow who does that is not a baseball pitcher at all. He’s a baseball gunman.”

The tide of denunciation overwhelmed Bill and left him momentarily dazed. “Is that what you think?” he asked weakly.

“I think,” said Jerry, “that it’s a pity you don’t shoot a clean game. With your control you could do the kind of pitching that Hastings could be proud of. Against the free swinger you could keep the ball high on the inside corner, and he wouldn’t have a chance. Against the fellow who chokes his bat—the chop hitter—you could keep it low and on the outside. The inside corner for the batters who crowd the plate, and the outside corner for those who stay back. You have enough curve; any fast ball has a natural curve. And with your control—”

Bill was recovering from his shock. “Who made you an authority on baseball?”

“You asked me what I thought.”

“I don’t care what you think,” Bill cried in a passion, and went raging down the street. And yet, even in

the height of his temper, something told him that he did care what Jerry thought and that, once more, as in their first meeting, he had been strangely placed upon the defensive.

He pitched the Raleigh game. The wounds that Jerry had rubbed with salt were still smarting. He determined to show just how good he was. Before the first inning was over, with that wicked "duster" zipping past their chins, the Raleigh boys were backing away from the plate and consternation was setting over the Raleigh bench. Bill won the game 6 to 0 and gave only two hits.

Wally, captain, and Gunn, catcher, babbled blissfully. The others were queerly silent. Bill was nettled.

"Well," he demanded of Roberts, "what did you think of that for a nine act show?"

"I thought their shortstop was going to come after you with a bat," replied the first baseman.

The shortstop had been responsible for Raleigh's two hits.

"I'll stop him when we play the return game," said Bill.

"We play them next time at Raleigh," Roberts observed. "I'd think twice before getting too fresh."

Bill left the locker room with the conviction that, somehow, the day had gone all wrong. He had seen Jerry at the game; he wondered what the reporter would write. Next day's *Courier* brought him the answer:

Raleigh's batters, afraid to crowd the plate for fear of being hit, got only two safe blows. Raleigh, under the circumstances, never had a chance.

Never had a chance! Ordinarily that phrase would mean that the losing team had been hopelessly outclassed, but in this case it meant something else. There was a quality about the paragraph that suggested a victory that was shady and cheap. Bill found himself staring hard at the ground.

"This fellow Ames is a nut," he told himself at last. "He doesn't understand. It's my business to see that they have as little chance as possible. I'm out there to win."

Brail pitched the game against Jackson High. Two hits, a base on balls and a sacrifice bunt gave Jackson two runs in the first. Roberts came in with the pitcher.

"Attaboy, Brail. Nice work. That last hit was a scratch. You hold 'em and we'll get some runs for you."

Hastings tied it with two runs in the third, only to go behind again in the fourth when Jackson scored two more runs on a hit, a base on balls, another sacrifice and two errors. This time half the infield accompanied Brail to the bench after he had fanned a Jackson batter for the third out and had left three keenly disappointed runners on the bases.

"Pretty work, Brail, pretty. Heads up. We'll begin to play baseball now."

"Only four hits, old man, and about half the game gone. That's doing it."

Roberts patted the pitcher's shoulder and sat down beside him, and Brail began to smile.

Bill bit his lips. He had allowed only two hits and won by a shut-out, and Roberts had given him no praise whatever. Here was Brail with four runs

chalked against him, and the team standing by him like buddies in battle. At that moment Bill was conscious of a gap, a bleak emptiness, a lack of warm and vital comradeship.

In the days that followed he felt a growing hunger. Even as his string of victories lengthened, he could not shake off the feeling of being more or less alone. True, Gunn still sang an ardent song of admiration, but Bill had begun to see that Gunn was captivated by the mechanics of perfect control. The catcher would have been just as much entranced by a well-trained performing bear in a circus or by a man cleverly juggling six plates. As for Wally, Bill now saw that the captain was too variable, too lacking in moral fibre for his support to count for much.

Now and then, Jerry, with scorebook and pencil, sat upon the bench. More and more, Bill was surprised to find the weight that was apparently attached to Jerry's opinions. At first the pitcher kept himself aloof; but with everybody else on friendly terms with the school reporter he saw that he was making his own position of unfriendliness marked. He began to talk with Jerry—scraps of trivial conversation that meant nothing. And then he noticed that there was a slight coolness, a touch of constraint, whenever Wally and the reporter met.

"Did you have a row with Jerry?" he asked Wally.

The captain nodded. "He argued that your trick of dusting 'em off was against the spirit of the game and that you ought to be canned."

Bill was not surprised. "What did you tell him?"

"I told him to show me something that would win as many games for Hastings."

It was the same answer Bill would have made several weeks ago. Yet, coming from Wally, it stumped him. Jerry had been definite. "This thing," he said, "is wrong." Wally had neither defended nor denied. "Show me something better," he had argued—and Bill knew that that was no argument at all. For the first time, in his secret soul of souls, he was uneasy and doubtful.

Roberts, too, added to the force of his wistful longings. To have the first baseman pat his shoulder, to give him a cheery "That's working," as he gave it to Brail and to Thomas, would have made him feel that he belonged. He had grown used to finding himself slighted in the *Courier*. He wouldn't care so much about that if Jerry would only give him the slow, understanding smile he sometimes gave to Brail.

Bill was shaken with a sudden fit of fury. "I'm not a crook! They give me no credit for skill. I haven't hit a batter all season, and Jerry calls me a baseball gunman. If I can scare them away from the plate—" Scare! Scare! He had picked an unfortunate word. And Jerry had called him an intimidator.

He pitched the game against St. Peter's Prep. After the warm-up, Gunn came to the bench shaking his head. Bill, the catcher confided to Wally, wasn't right.

"Control gone?" Wally asked anxiously.

"No; it isn't that. But he looks queer—as though he were under a strain. He isn't the same Bill."

Yet for three innings Bill held St. Peter's scoreless, and in those three innings a home run by Roberts, with Wally on second, accounted for two Hastings runs. Gunn, coming to the bench after the third inning, sat down beside the pitcher.

"Lost your nerve?" he asked. "You're off to-day. I've signalled you a dozen times and you haven't put that duster ball over once. They'll begin to hit you the first thing you know."

"You're up next," said Bill. "We could use another run or two."

He was glad to be rid of the catcher. He had an idea that Jerry, further along the bench, was watching him; he did not turn to see. Roberts slid into the place that Gunn had vacated.

"Nice work, Bill," the first baseman said.

Bill glowed for just a moment. Nice work because it was clean work. Then all those other games— He winced.

For seven innings his control kept St. Peter's from even the threat of a score. He was pitching with his head, studying the batters, sending the ball where it was least welcome. And then, in the eighth, things went wrong. Gunn let a third strike go through him, and the batter got to first. The next boy hit to short. With a sure double play in front of him Wally fumbled, and there were two on and one out.

Bill began to sweat. To lose this game after he had tried so hard to win it! The batter at the plate had hit safely once before; if he hit now—

Roberts' voice came crooning from the direction of first base. "Keep working, Bill old boy. We're with you. This is only a flurry. Keep working, Bill."

Bill pitched, and the batter drove a screaming liner toward left field. Bill's breath caught. But the ball was foul by inches.

"That's the first strike, Bill. You're getting him in the hole!" Roberts was pleading.

The shock of that hit had chilled the pitcher through and through. Gunn, with signaling fingers, was demanding the bean ball. With a sudden nod Bill let the ball go, and the batter leaped back to get away from the pitch.

Roberts' voice was silent.

After that the batter was easy. Two balls on the outside corner, and the umpire waved him to the bench. The next boy staggered back from a ball that dusted his chest, and on the next pitch rolled a weak grounder to the box. The game had been saved.

Hastings shrilled a cheer as Bill came to the bench. He sat there and stared ahead of him. When the side was out he arose, sighed, and walked toward the mound. Roberts walked beside him. Bill could sense that the first baseman was sorry for him. Sorry? He didn't want sympathy from anybody.

"I'm pitching this game my way," he said savagely.

"You're your own doctor," Roberts replied quietly, and turned off toward first base.

All through the last inning Bill used the bean ball, and it. Peter's didn't get a man to first. With the game over, the pitcher snapped his sweater up from the bench and strode toward the locker room. Next day the *Tourier* printed this:

Despite the fact that he was touched up for eight hits, Stockton pitched his best game of the year. With crafty cunning he pitched each batter's weakness, and his control never shone so brightly. The crowd, missing the real meaning of what was happening on the

field, gave him a thundering cheer when he blanked St. Peter's in the eighth. It was the inning in which he was least entitled to acclaim.

Bill folded the paper and put it in his pocket. Eight hits, and yet his best game of the year! After all, with fellows like Jerry and Roberts, there was something greater than the mere winning of a game. You had to be white. If only he hadn't dusted the batter after that terrific, long foul—

"I did it," he said bitterly, "so what's the use of crying about it now?"

The St. Peter's game had been played on a Friday. Monday, Wally said to him:

"I'm going to save you for Jefferson High. That's our biggest shot; if we win that we win everything. I'll use Brail against Farragut High on Wednesday, and Thomas against Park Hill on Friday. That will give you a good rest. We want that Jefferson game, Bill."

"I'll try to get it," Bill assured him.

Brail sent Farragut down to defeat. Thomas lost the Park Hill game, 8 to 7. Gunn lamented the Park Hill defeat. If Thomas had had a good buster ball, Park Hill would not have scored four runs.

"Thank goodness," the catcher said fervently, "we have Bill for Jefferson. She won't get very far."

Bill flushed.

The day of the Jefferson game found him cold and hot by turns—trembling one moment, and tense the next. The game was played away from home. Hastings, first at bat, went out on six pitched balls.

"This is going to be a battle," predicted Gunn as he

buckled on his protector. "Give them everything you have, Bill. Runs are going to be scarce."

Bill grew hot again. The first Jefferson batter did not like them high on the inside corner, and ended by popping to Roberts. The next boy had a good eye. With the count two and three, Bill gambled on an inside corner pitch and missed, the batter going to first. It was the third base on balls that Bill had given all season. He shook his head. Another slip like this might prove costly.

The boy on first had a good eye, but he was a poor base runner. In three or four apparent ways he showed that he intended to steal. Bill anticipated the move and sent Gunn a pitch-out. The catcher, over-eager, got a poor grip on the ball, tried to change the position of his fingers, and ended by making a bad throw. The runner was safe on second with only one out.

Roberts' voice came to him like a prayer. "Bill! Oh, Bill!"

Bill's pitch was clean. The batter slashed it on the ground. Roberts came in on it like a ferret. A figure was dashing for third. From a crouched position the first baseman whipped the ball across the diamond. He could not hear the umpire's voice, but the upward wave of his hand was visible above the dust cloud that was raised by the slide.

"That's pitching, Bill," Roberts' voice carried a note of triumph.

Bill was conscious that his throat had been contracted and that the air, rushing to his lungs in great gulps, tasted good. Gunn had made a mess of that first runner. Perhaps the boy on first, counting on another sloppy throw, would also try to steal. He would have to go

down before the batter was forced to hit, else a safe rap would merely move him around instead of scoring him. So Bill, with a slight signal to Gunn, sent another pitch-out.

The runner was away with the pitch. But this time Gunn got the ball securely. His whistling shot to Wally caught the runner by three feet.

All the way to the bench, Bill was conscious that something was pressing on him. Not until he sat down did he realize that it had been Roberts' hand, patting his shoulder.

"I got through it," he kept muttering. "I got through it." Gunn was demanding why he had not dusted them. He did not hear the catcher's voice. Jerry, score book open, was watching the field and smiling that slow, understanding smile.

For seven innings the game stayed a scoreless tie. Gunn had been a good prophet—runs were scarce. In the eighth inning, Wally, first up, was safe on an infield error. Bill, clutching his knees, prayed for a hit. Gunn, second up, forced Wally at second, Jerry touched the pitcher with the score book.

"You're up, Bill."

He was so eager that he swung at bad balls. The Jefferson pitcher struck him out with the fifth pitch. As he stepped away from the plate he met Roberts going up for his turn.

"Rob!" he pleaded.

"I'll try to," the first baseman said grimly. "You deserve it."

He swung on the second ball and fired a three-bagger into deep left center.

"There's your game, Bill," cried Jerry.

Bill's heart pounded. One run in the eighth—and he hadn't pitched a dirty ball! The Jefferson pitcher, shaken by that disaster, threw a wild pitch, and Roberts dashed home with the second run. A moment later, after the third out, Hastings took the field.

"Dust them, Bill," Gunn pleaded. "You've got a lead now."

The pitcher's lips pressed tightly together. He didn't answer.

Jefferson was helpless before him in the eighth. Hastings was blanked in the ninth. And then Bill went out to face the fire for the last time.

"Not a dirty ball," he told himself. The batter lumped his first pitch in front of the plate. He raced in, picked it up, let it fall, made a blind stab for it and missed.

"Let it go," cried Roberts. Better a runner on first than a hurried, wild throw that would place him on second or third.

Gunn retrieved the ball and walked to the pitcher. "Dust them," he said in a fierce undertone. "Have you gone crazy? Dust them and save yourself."

Bill shook his head. As he pitched, the runner bluffed for second. Wally ran over to take the throw. And the batter, catching the ball, drove it through the spot where Wally had been a moment before. When the ball was returned to the infield, there were runners on second and third.

Twice Bill wiped the sweat from his hand. A little dusting and he would have this game where he wanted. And yet, though the thought lured him, tempted him,

tormented him, he shook his head to the signals that the catcher flashed. The boy at the plate, gripping the bat at its very end, held it far back over his shoulder. He would swing with all his power. Bill fed him a slow, tantalizing ball on the inside.

"Strike one."

The batter had been forced to swing and choke the bat against his body at the same time.

Again that slow ball on the inside.

"Strike two."

The batter was shortening his grip and moving back from the plate a bit. Bill pitched the third one outside. It was a ball, and the batter unconsciously edged forward again. And then Bill zipped a fast one past him while he stood flat-footedly expecting another slow pitch.

"You're out!" marked the umpire.

Bill's nerves shook with an elation that was new and intoxicating. Never, while he had cowed batters and had mowed them down, had his heart sang as it sang now.

"That's showing them something, Bill, old boy," came from Roberts.

He flashed the first baseman a smile. Another batter was waiting, with stick gripped short. Holding the bat that way, he'd have a hard time reaching the outside corner. Bill tried the outside with a ball shoulder high.

"Strike one."

The boy at the plate stretched his arms the better to reach the next one. He was out of position for the inside, and Bill sent him a ball that came low and close.

"Strike two."

The batter was bewildered. In that state, Bill knew, he would be tense with anticipation and anxiety. Bill tried him with a floater and he swung before the ball reached the plate.

"You're out."

Bill saw Jerry, on the bench, toss his score book into the air. The third batter had Bill puzzled. He couldn't remember what he had hit at in earlier innings, and could not read his stand at the plate. He tried an experimental ball outside.

"Ball one!" ruled the umpire.

Jefferson took heart and began to cheer. But Bill had earned what he wanted to know. The batter was one who swung downward at the ball.

Bill served a pitch shoulder high. The boy at the plate hit into it and rapped it along the ground. Wally took three steps in, picked it out of the air as it bounded, and lined it across to Roberts. The game was over.

The nine made much of Bill in the dressing room, but what he valued most was that slow smile of Jerry's and the rap across the shoulders from Roberts that knocked the breath out of his body. They seemed to gravitate together, these three who had never been friendly. On the way home in the train they monopolized two seats. Jerry worked out his box score for the *courier*; Roberts hummed and beat time on the arm of his seat; Bill relaxed in contentment and stared out the train window.

Jerry looked up from the score book. "Bill, you sure were in a hole in the ninth."

"With two men on base, is that what you mean?" Bill asked.

Jerry nodded.

"The first inning," Bill differed, "was the toughest. Right then I learned something."

"What?"

"There are two ways of winning a ball game."

Roberts and Jerry looked their inquiry.

"Using a bean ball is one—" Bill hesitated before going on.

"And the other?"

The pitcher grinned. "Using your bean."

THE END

